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MISCELLANEOUS

SERMONS.

BY THE

REV. SYDNEY SMITH, A.M.,

LATE FELLOW OF NEW COLLEGE, OXFORD; RECTOR OF FOSTON, IN YORKSHIRE;
PREACHER AT THE FOUNDLING, AND AT BERKELEY,
AND FITZROY CHAPELS.

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SERMON I.

ON REPENTANCE.

PART I.

In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judea, and saying, repent ye, for the kingdom of Heaven is at hand.—MATTHEW III. VERSE 1.

In treating of the duty of repentance we must particularize those signs which are to be considered as characteristic of a repentance efficacious to salvation; and I think we may say, that such repentance should be sincere, timely, continuous, and just.

First. The greatest of all follies is a mockery of God by insincere repentance, by that fluctuation between sin, and sorrow, resolution and infringement,—by that endless circle of penitence, and crime, which they tread, who know virtue only by its labours, and extract nothing from guilt but remorse. The first stage of repentance is in every man's power, and almost in every man's practice. If sighs and tears could purchase the kingdom of Heaven, and a sad face expiate a wicked life, hardness of heart would indeed be weakness of understanding: but, though God is merciful, he is not fallible, nor will he take the odour of sacrifices, or the incense of words, in the lieu of a solid, laborious virtue. In the Christian religion there is no compensation, no arrangement, no shifting, no fluctuation, no dalliance with duties, no deference to darling vices: if the eye offends us, we must pluck it out; if the hand is sinful, we must cut it off.—Better to merit heaven by every suffering, than eternal punishment by every gratification.

We may see, by this striking passage, the absolute necessity of abandoning the vice, before repentance can be effec-

tual to salvation. Our blessed Saviour departs from his usual mildness of speech; he does not say, if thine eye is evil anoint it; if thine hand is diseased heal it; but pluck it out, cut it off, tear it from thee; he requires that a man should rise above himself; that the thought of heaven should breathe into him a moral fortitude; that he should be great in purpose, rapid in action, unshaken in constancy; that he should tear out his ambition, his revenge, his avarice, and all the harlot passions he has wooed, and trample them beneath his feet; that he should feel that noble persuasion which the great apostle felt,—*that neither death, nor life, nor principalities, nor powers, should separate him from the love of God.*

Not that our blessed Saviour intends to say, by the expressions I have quoted, that the only mode of effecting a change is by such sudden, and vigorous resolutions; but that, where sudden and vigorous resolutions are necessary, any violence done to habit, any pain endured by depriving ourselves of enjoyments to which we have been accustomed, is not for an instant to be weighed against the danger of retaining the sin, or the advantage of abjuring it. A certain portion of time, indeed, and a certain gradation in improvement, must be allowed to the infirmities of our nature; and that repentance is not unacceptable to God where there is progress in righteousness. Whichever of us all can look back at the time past with the pleasing certainty that he has acquired a greater power over any one bad passion; that his virtuous resolutions are more constantly observed; that the habit of doing good, and saying good, and thinking good, are growing stronger and stronger in his heart;—the repentance of that man is a repentance which leads to salvation, and he is becoming more fit for the kingdom of heaven, as he approaches nearer to it.

Sincere repentance consists not only in abstaining, but in justice, in making restitution, or compensation for the injuries we have committed against our fellow-creatures. These are duties from which no lapse of time, and hardly any alteration of circumstances, can ever exempt us. It is never too late to do justice; if we die without doing it, the gates of God's mercy are shut against us, and we can have no benefit from the cross of Christ. If seas and mountains separate us from the being we have injured, we should pass over mountains and seas to find him; to beg his prayers to God, and to restore to

him wine, and oil, and vineyards, and olive yards, tenfold for all we have taken. If the grave hides him from us, we should visit his children's children with blessings, and be thankful that one vestige of his race existed upon the earth. No man can know rest, or peace, while there remains in his heart the remembrance of a crime for which he has made no atonement. If you have taken aught of any man, give it back; and, when it is gone, your soul will be at ease.—If you have done secret wrong to his name, come out to the light of day, and restore innocence to the dignity it has lost. Shame is bad, and infamy is bad, and blushes are bad; but the wrath of God is worse than all these;—it is more bitter than the curses of a nation, and fiercer than an army with banners.

If the danger of not restoring should alarm us, there is something in the pleasure of restitution which may allure us; it eases our shoulders from the burthen of sin, it appeases the restless anger of conscience, and renders the mind cheerful and serene;—if it takes away the stalled ox, it dissipates hatred; if it leaves the dinner of herbs, they are seasoned with content. Did any man, who had overcome the first difficulty of doing justice, ever repent of the effort he had made?—Did he ever say, my feelings of guilt were better than my feelings of innocence—I am disappointed by righteousness, and I wish to reclaim the wages of sin which I have unadvisedly refunded? Death, says the son of Sirach, is terrible to him who lives at ease in his possessions; but death is tenfold more terrible to him who lives in misery amid his possessions, with the consciousness that he ought never to have enjoyed them; that, year after year, he has been reaping the fruits of injustice; that the time is now gone by in which he might have pacified both God and man; and that nothing remains but a sorrow which no repentance can prevent, and which no time can cure.

If restitution is impossible, compensation is almost always in our power,—a compensation proportioned to our means. There is hardly any man so intrenched in happiness that he is utterly inaccessible to acts of kindness. Any signs of humble benevolence, any real contrition of the heart, towards an injured person, God will accept; if it is the only compensation which accident enables us to make.—The sin which God never will forgive, is that cold and barren penitence which is only sorrowful because it cannot reconcile the feelings of virtue with the profits of crime. I allow that it is

difficult to do justice, that it is difficult to compensate, and difficult to restore; but one great effort is less costly than a thousand moments of remorse;—it is better to do that violence to your feelings, which every subsequent moment will convert into a more powerful source of happiness, than to retain any object of your desire, which every moment will convert into a more powerful cause of reproach.—The fruits of fraud and injustice are yours as a diseased limb is yours, for pain and for weakness, not for enjoyment: health does not make it an auxiliary; but adhesion makes it a burden. If the life which God gave has left it, my hand is no hand to me; and if riches, and honour, and power, and every earthly blessing, are not founded upon righteousness, which is their health, and their life, they are not blessings, but burthen, and anguish, and disease, and death.

I have, hitherto, principally insisted upon the necessity of justice as an ingredient of sincere repentance; but there can be no very sincere repentance without sorrow.—Indeed, unless the evils and apprehensions to which sin gives birth, are so powerfully impressed upon the mind as to fill it with sadness, there is little security for that part of repentance which consists in action.—Much is due, also, to the offended Majesty of Heaven; we must not confess our impurities to God with an unshaken spirit; we must not lift up an undaunted face towards his throne, and breathe out the sad story of our lives in the firm accents of a fearless voice. "*The publican, standing afar off, would not so much as lift up his eyes to Heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner.—I tell you this man went down to his house justified rather than the other.*"

Repentance must not only be sincere and just, but it must be timely;—it must take place at such a period as will enable us to make a solid, real sacrifice of unlawful enjoyment to a sense of Christian duty. Satiety is often mistaken for repentance, and many give up the offence, when they have lost all appetite for its commission;—change of body is mistaken for change of mind, and he who quits a vice, become unnatural to his period of life, deems himself a progressive penitent; and believes he is receding from pleasure, because pleasure is receding from him.

To repent of passions, when passions are sweet and strong, has the merit of virtue, because it has the difficulty; to oppose languor, to chain down inertness; and to vanquish imbecility,

is to offer to the Lord our God that which costs us nothing; and to claim the kingdom of heaven for not doing that which we cannot do.—Truly blessed is he who arrests himself in the middle career of pleasure, while he has yet numbered but few days, and a fair portion of life is still before him. God loveth the hoary hairs of the righteous; but when they who are far from the grave, when the young, the beautiful, and the strong, turn to the Lord their God in weeping, in fasting, and repentance, then is the great victory of Christ over sin; then, truly, are the ninety and nine just persons forgotten; and the joy in heaven is exceeding great. Seriousness, in old age, we in some degree attribute to bodily causes; the early and rational repentance of a young person, disgusted with the first aspect of sin, is the most genuine and beautiful form of repentance; it affords us the example of temptation resisted when it is the strongest, apology rejected when it is the most natural, and the laws of religion respected, when the chance of atoning for their violation is the most complete. No exception from the common course of passions can be more beautiful, no goodness more unequivocal, more useful to man as an example, and more grateful to God as a sacrifice.

If there be gradations in the rewards we are to receive hereafter, and many mansions in the house of the Father, to what height of excellence will he arrive, and to what eminence of reward will he attain, who sees before him half a life of progressive improvement? The work of righteousness begins with the dawn of reason, to terminate in the darkness of death; and the advanced point at which we are found, at the conclusion of our labours, must, of course, depend on the period at which they have commenced, and the vigour with which they have been prosecuted. Any repentance is better than a lasting obstinacy in sin; but it is young repentance which sanctifies an human soul here upon earth, which cleanses it from the passions of the flesh, and fills it full of sweet, holy, everlasting godliness. If the feeble efforts of old age are all we can give up to the purification of the soul, death will overtake us labouring and toiling at the very basis of the eminence; it ought to overtake us near the summit, standing on the very confines of the first and the latter world; calm, tranquil, clear of every earthly feeling, and waiting for the hour of God, when he will call us to the dwellings of peace.

If these observations upon the necessity of a timely repent-

ance be true, it follows, of course, that what is commonly termed a death-bed repentance, can be of no avail to the attainment of immortal salvation. Indeed, if we were not aware of what a fallacious reasoner vice is, we should be astonished that such an absurdity should enter into the mind of man; as if the sin which begins in youth, which is matured in manhood, which is cherished in old age, which destroys the moral order of the universe, infringes the clear mandates of the Gospel, and scatters sorrow and misery throughout the world, can be atoned for by the lamentations of a being who never thought of deploring his sins till he had lost all power of enjoying them. He has seen, unmoved, for threescore years, misfortune, evil, and death: he has listened, in vain, to the voice of moralists, and to the precepts of the Gospel; and, in a moment when the spectre of death starts up before him, he is righteous: What will he be if that spectre vanish again? What will he be if God gives him back his life? Is there any certainty that he will use that life for the glory of his maker?—Is there any certainty that he will not forget God in health again, as he has forgotten him before? That he will not require the same lassitude, the same anguish, and the same distress, to call him to the care of salvation, which have awakened in him before a momentary feeling of religion? Such repentance can be nothing worth; if it is effectual to salvation, all other repentance is superfluous to salvation. Sin is made co-extensive with life; every motive to righteousness is at an end; and a little muttering of religion, a few moments before death, is the sum of piety, the definition of virtue, and the passport to Heaven.

If a death-bed repentance is enough, who would fear God in the days of their youth, and endure the greater burthen when a lesser weight would suffice? "My hour is not yet come; I have many years before me in which I may forget my God, and follow the devices of my heart;—it will suffice if I weep, and fast, and pray, in the days when I am well-stricken in years;—let those praise God who are drawing near unto him; I will be happy and sensual while I am young; and reserve the gloom of religion for sickness and old age." Such is the state of principles which the doctrine of a death-bed repentance naturally produces; it is a doctrine founded upon convenience, not upon truth; it makes the duty of repentance more easy; but it makes it utterly useless;—it is calculated to reconcile every one to the precepts of the Gos-

pel; and to frustrate every purpose for which the Gospel was given to mankind.

This subject of repentance is of such importance, and such extent, that I must reserve what more I have to say upon it to another time; and I shall be satisfied, at present, with the endeavour I have made, to impress upon this congregation the necessity that repentance should be sincere, early, and just; that the resolution which gives it birth, should be strong enough to prevent relapse; that it should be soon enough to make the sacrifice to the religion of Christ real and valuable; and that it should inspire that spirit of restitution, or compensation, which is the best evidence to prove that our repentance is sincere, and the best means to ascertain that it is useful. It was to teach these truths that the warning voice was first heard in the wilderness; it was to rouse, and it was to save, that the Baptist spoke in the solemn stillness of the forest, and said,—*That the time was short,—that the day was coming,—that the fan would soon drive the chaff on the floor,—that one was near at hand, the hem of whose garment he dare not touch, nor loose the latchet of his shoe.* My brethren, the time is still short,—the day is still coming,—the fan is still ready for the chaff,—and he is not far off, whose garment the prophet dare not touch, nor loose the latchet of his shoe.—Remember, then, the frailty of human life,—remember the bitterness of death,—listen to the warning voice,—begin, continue, repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand.

SERMON II.

ON REPENTANCE.

PART II.

In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judea, and saying, repent ye, for the kingdom of Heaven is at hand.—MATTHEW III. VERSE 1.

IN my last discourse upon this subject, I endeavoured to show that a spirit of justice and sincerity, proved by abstinence from the sin, was necessary to repentance; and that repentance, to be efficacious to salvation, should be begun at an early period.

After this endeavour to show what is meant by a Christian repentance, I shall proceed to state those causes from which repentance commonly originates, and those means by which it may be fertilized into Christian righteousness. The use of this will be, that, by impressing on our minds those circumstances from which amendment usually proceeds, we shall labour to produce them, if they are events within our own power, and cherish them as the choicest gifts of God, if they are not.

Repentance in after-life, most commonly, will be found to proceed from a good, moral, and religious education, in youth. When once the rules of the Gospel are inculcated in childhood, and its beautiful morality firmly fixed in the mind, we are not to consider them as lost, because they are not always practised in the season of levity and passion;—they are best seen in their revival, after a long suspense, when they scare the voluptuary from his revels, when they make the thoughtless think, and the bold tremble, and the godless pray; when the seed, which seemed dead, shoots forth into an harvest;

when the dry wood becomes green with life, and glorious with increase.

Providence has provided a source of repentance, in those events which warn us of the vanity of the world, and admonish us to prepare for that kingdom which is near at hand: —to watch over the gradual waste of life; to minister to the last sickness; to mourn over friends that perish, and children that are snatched away;—these things teach us all to repent; they are lessons to which every ear is open, and by which all hearts are impressed. We remember how probable it is that every succeeding year will be marked by some fresh loss;—that parent, and husband, and child, and friend, may all perish away, and leave us a wreck of time in the feeble solitude of age. Then it is that the views we take of human life are serious and solemn; then we feel that godliness is the one thing stable, and unshaken by time and chance; then we listen to the warning voice, which cries,—*Repent ye, for the kingdom of Heaven is at hand.*

In truth, the warnings to repentance are not few; such are the adverse blows of fortune,—sudden poverty, disappointed ambition, any circumstance which, by weakening our dependence upon outward objects, and by driving us to seek for comfort and support from our inward feelings, teaches us to derive our happiness from its pure and legitimate source.

The feelings of bodily decay often lead to repentance; it happens, fortunately for man, that he is not called out of the world in the vigour of health, not by a sudden annihilation, but by a gradual destruction of his being; every blunted sense, and every injured organ, admonish him that it is drawing near; and, when it does come, death has only the shadow of a man to subdue. Listen, then, to these warnings of a merciful God;—when the ear is slow to receive sounds, —when the eye has lessened its range,—when the nerve trembles,—when the red blood of youth and strength is gone, —when the proud body of man is bent down,—listen to these warnings of a merciful God; sanctify the frail and departing flesh. Repent ye, for the kingdom of Heaven is indeed at hand.

Providence has provided a source of repentance in those great events which astonish the world, and some share of good springs up from the very midst of devastation.—When the judgments of God are out upon the earth—when a pestilence rages—when a conqueror exterminates,—the thoughts

of men become solemn, and every countenance gathers its portion of sorrow;—then, no man doubts of the shortness of life, when he beholds death making his meal, not of one, or two, but of thousands, and tens of thousands;—then, no man is unmindful of human weakness, when he sees how the fairest creations are broken into dust;—then, all feel the vanity of human wishes, and human designs, when they behold the arts, the arms, the industry of nations, overwhelmed by an omnipotent destroyer, and their heritage tost to the children of blood.

Such are the times and seasons in which we now live, when every year involves some ancient empire in destruction, and the evils of unprincipled ambition are let loose upon mankind. That the terror to which such times give birth may be dissipated, we must all sincerely pray; that the long and dark shadow, which they cast upon every man's heart, may be illumined, we must all implore of Almighty God; but I wish that awful feeling of human weakness, which these times inspire, may ever prevail; I wish that right sentiment of absolute dependence upon Almighty Providence may be as visible in our future happiness as it is in our present peril; I wish, when all the passions unfavourable to human happiness have subsided, that the only one these times have produced, which has any tendency to place human happiness upon its proper basis, may be more exquisitely felt, more widely diffused, and more profoundly revered.

Having stated the causes from which repentance commonly originates, I am next to show by what means and by what motives repentance may be best fixed into a habit, so that it does not vanish away and become ineffectual, after it has once begun to operate.

The first, and greatest mode of repenting, is by resolving to be free, by a revolt against the tyranny of sin, and a struggle for the freedom of righteousness. This is a love of freedom, which produces no excess, and acknowledges no limits which is at work to destroy the anarchy of passion, and restore the lawful empire of religion;—not that foolish love of freedom which attempts to get rid of all restriction, but that useful love of freedom, which is conscious that men must be restrained, and busies itself only in providing, that the restraints to which they are subjected shall be the wisest and the best.

But, it may be asked, is there really tyranny in sin? and

does repentance make a man free? or are these the mere habitual phrases of ministers of the Gospel? There is tyranny in sin; there is more than Egyptian bondage; it is bondage to hate an appetite, and to serve it; to make one law for your heart which you cannot follow; and to follow another which you cannot love;—it is a very great tyranny to find all your noble resolutions frustrated by one base sensuality; to see the honour and peace, and piety, within your reach, snatched from you by one degrading passion; to know that you are cheated out of happiness, and out of salvation; not by a pleasure, for that would be something, but by an habit, by that which at last yields no other pleasure in the doing, than the absence of that misery which would proceed from not doing it: in fine, in all wretchedness, and under the rod of any oppressor, if a man despise not himself, joy has not left that man, neither is happiness turned away from his paths; but the eternal frailty of sin at length degrades a man in his own eyes, makes him cast away his soul in despair, and become ostentatious in vice, because, in the pursuit of virtue, he is contemptible and mean.

The delight which success imparts in this sort of conflict is no mean motive to begin: most fervently, and sincerely, do I express my real thoughts, when I say that wealth, power, fame, and all the vulgar objects of human ambition, have not a single pleasure comparable to that which results from victory over sin: they do not only fall far short of it in degree, but they have nothing like it in kind;—we might as well liken the melody of the harp to the sounds which are sung out before the throne of God, or measure the proudest fabric upon earth against the eternal arch of the heavens.

When vice has become so intrenched in habit, and the mind so feeble, that every germ of repentance is stifled as soon as it appears, then we must gradually repent. The mind will not yield totally to first efforts, but it will yield a little; and every time we return, with stronger force, to a weaker resistance; for the same law of habit which makes the sin so powerful, confirms the virtue which resists it. The gradual attempt at repentance does not flatter us by a sudden act of power, or spare our patience by its rapid progress: often we are hurried on by the inveteracy of habit, and driven down by the vehemence of passion; but let us keep on, and continue; if only a year of life remains, let that be a year of repentance; remember, that the reward for

which we labour is the salvation of our souls; and, that if any motive can stimulate human industry, or animate human exertion, an hope, above all this world can promise, should lead to efforts above all this world can produce.

But it often happens, that the penitence, began at a moment of sickness, or despondence, or seriousness, vanishes with its cause, as the fearful dreams of the night are dispelled by the morning's light. In this fatal resumption of self-confidence, we should remember, that the horror of our vices, which we experienced in the moment of peril, will probably return at the greatest of all perils; that the reasonings against our sins, which have before appeared so irresistible, and conclusive, will resume their power, when they cannot re-produce the effects of repentance; that it is childish to say, there is a God in the storm, and to become an Atheist again when the winds and the waves are still; to blaspheme in health, and bless in sickness; to enter upon the first stage of repentance, at every event more serious than common, and to relapse into our ancient sins the moment we resume our original feelings.

Though the instability of repentance does sometimes proceed from the errors of the understanding, it is most commonly to be attributed to the inability to execute what the understanding determines to be right; there is a state of mind, (a very common one,) in which an human being, perfectly aware he is doing wrong, and destroying his own happiness, cannot refrain from the impulse of present gratification. Such a strange preference of evil has led some to suppose, that the imagination always miscolours the facts in these cases, and that, at the moment of election, from some specious misrepresentation, the best of two actions is made to appear the worst, and the worst the best. On the contrary, it is quite manifest, when gratifications are immediate, and penalties remote, that men do deliberately pursue that line of conduct which they have no doubt will produce to them a much greater portion of misery than good. I do not only mean misery in a world to come, but misery in this; and to such an extreme is irresolution carried, that men will frequently do that for which they are absolutely certain they must atone, by tenfold wretchedness, within the short period of a day, or an hour;—such is the power of immediate enjoyment over the minds of men.

The great mean of making repentance efficacious, is by

holding no parley with temptation; to hesitate is to consent; to listen is to be convinced; to pause is to yield.—The soul of a penitent man should be as firm against future relapse as it is sorrowful for past iniquity: the only chance for doing well, is to be stubborn in new righteousness; to hear nothing but on one side, and to be indebted for safety to prudence rather than to impartiality; above all things, to tremble for youthful virtue; not to trust ourselves till we have walked long with God,—till the full measure of his grace is upon us, —till long abstinence has taught us to forbear,—till we have gained such wide, and such true knowledge of pleasure, that we comprehend salvation and eternity, in the circle of your joys.

When we ponder over the Scriptures, there is one very delightful promise which they hold out; not only that repentance, producing a real alteration of life, will be accepted of God as an atonement for sin; but so much does that acceptance and forgiveness make a part, and an essential part of the great scheme of redemption, that we are told, there will be joy in heaven over a repentant sinner; that the vanquishing of evil penetrates into other worlds, reaches to higher systems, diffuses joy over greater beings, and purer natures, whom we should have supposed to be occupied with their own proper and essential happiness; therefore, no man should say, my life has been too bad,—I have gone too far, —I have trespassed too much,—I may as well go on to the end,—I have no chance of being saved.—It is better far that such a man should make a last effort for his soul, that he should come forth, and lay his sin upon the altar, and call earnestly to God with a contrite and a wounded heart. —Ninety and nine just persons cannot move Heaven as much as the true sorrows of sin; all things are better than the abandonment of hope in Providence, and the daring, wicked, impenitent violation of the laws of God.

I will now, then, shortly recapitulate all that I have said, in my two discourses, upon the subject of repentance. I have said, that repentance must be sincere;—that to be sincere, it must conduce to righteousness, and must include restitution, or compensation; that its efficacy is in proportion to the early period at which it is begun,—and that it has no efficacy at all, if it is deferred till the moment of death:— The causes of repentance, I have stated to be a good, religious education; sickness, old age, and all great physical

evils, public or private repentance, when once excited by these causes, should be rendered permanent by the recollection of those feelings which first gave it birth, by dividing the difficulty, so as to accommodate it to our weak state of resolution, or by overwhelming it, at once, by one great effort. If these things have in them any shadow of truth,—if they are founded upon the spirit of the Gospel, then repent ye; sin no more; leave the pledge upon the altar; give back the thirty pieces of silver, the wages of Satan; and, remember your Creator while life yet remains;—wait not till palsy and fever teach you to repent; wait not till pain and anguish teach you the power of God;—learn, rather, that power from the blessings you enjoy, and while you do enjoy them, repent ye,—for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand.

SERMON III.

ON TRUTH.

Ananias, hearing these things, fell down, and gave up the Ghost.—Acts v. verse 5.

Of all the miracles employed for the propagation of the Gospel, this is the most terrible.—In most of the other miracles, the object is merciful, while the means are supernatural; the laws of nature are suspended to cleanse the leper, to illumine the blind, and even to raise the dead from their graves.—The object here, is to punish, to smite with sudden death:—Ananias and Sapphira are guilty of a lie, and, in an instant, in the full tide of life, they fall down dead at the feet of the apostle.

As the age of miracles is no more, and the necessity for their occurrence removed by the diffusion and security of the Gospel, we are no longer exposed to the same punishment for the same violation of truth, but that punishment stands on the book as a tremendous record of the magnitude of the sin. It gives us a full view of that wrath with which it will hereafter be pursued; and teaches us how fatally it moves the displeasure of God. I shall avail myself, then, of this awful history, to examine the nature of truth, its importance as a part of Christian righteousness, and to investigate how the habit of speaking truth is impaired, perverted, destroyed, instituted, and confirmed.

Upon truth rests all human knowledge: to truth man is indebted for the hourly preservation of his life, and for a perpetual guide to his actions; without truth the affairs of the world could no longer exist, as they now are, than they could if any of the great physical laws of the universe were suspended. As truth is of indispensable necessity in the great

concerns of the world, it is also of immense importance as it relates to the common and daily intercourse of life. Falsehood must have a direct and powerful tendency to disturb the order of human affairs, and to introduce into the bosom of society every gradation and variety of mischief.

There is a natural tendency in all men to speak the truth, because it is absolutely necessary we should inform ourselves of the truth for the common purposes of existence, and we do not say one thing while we know another, but for the intervention of causes which are comparatively infrequent and extraordinary; the first of these which I shall mention is vanity. The vanity of being interesting, of exciting curiosity, and escaping from the pain of obscurity:—Great part of the mischief done to character, and of those calumnies which ruffle the quiet of life, have their origin in this source. —Nor is the falsehood which proceeds from it to be considered as of little importance; it is incompatible with that earnest and permanent regard to human happiness which the Gospel exacts; it is inimical to that daily exercise of keeping the conscience void of offence towards God, and towards man, which it prescribes: A Christian should never forget that in the progress of refinement, as much is felt for character as for the more gross and substantive advantages of life; in the beginning, we have only property in food and raiment; but as the world goes on, there springs up the invisible, intangible property of fame, which nourishes a man's life, though he be hungered, and cold, and without which he is dead in the midst of life; if respect to this is not foreign to human happiness, it is not foreign to the Gospel: I am sure it is as much the duty of a pious Christian to abhor falsehood, injurious to the feelings of his fellow-creatures, as it is to abhor falsehood which may disturb them in the just right of their possession; and at every moment, and in every relation of life, it must be his duty to respect truth as the ancient and solemn barrier of human happiness.—Not that what is said on such occasions is mere falsehood; but the mischief is done by embellishment, by colouring, by false insinuation, by slight change, and by artful suppression: broad, shameless falsehood is seldom witnessed in the world; and the greatest violator of truth preserves enough of it for outward decency and inward tranquillity: for, though Satan corrupted man, God made him, and he loves Heaven in the midst of his iniquity; he is ever ready to throw over his sins

the robe of virtue, to comfort his soul with soothing words and decent pretences, and to say a grace to God, before he sets down to feast with Mammon.

There is a liar, who is not so much a liar from vanity as from warmth of imagination, and levity of understanding; such a man has so thoroughly accustomed his mind to extraordinary combinations of circumstances, that he is disgusted with the insipidity of any probable event; the power of changing the whole course of nature is too fascinating for resistance; every moment must produce rare emotions, and stimulate high passions; life must be a series of zests, and relishes, and provocations, and languishing existence be refreshed by daily miracles: In the meantime, the dignity of man passes away, the bloom of Heaven is effaced, friends vanish from this degraded liar; he can no longer raise the look of wonder, but is heard in deep, dismal, contemptuous silence; he is shrunk from and abhorred, and lives to witness a gradual conspiracy against him of all that is good and honourable, and wise and great.

Fancy and vanity are not the only parents of falsehood;—the worst, and the blackest species of it, has its origin in fraud;—and, for its object, to obtain some advantage in the common intercourse of life.—Though this kind of falsehood is the most pernicious, in its consequences, to the religious character of him who is infected by it; and the most detrimental to the general happiness of society, it requires, (from the universal detestation in which it is held,) less notice in an investigation of the nature of truth, intended for practical purposes.—He whom the dread of universal infamy,—the horror of being degraded from his rank in society,—the thought of an hereafter will not inspire with the love of truth, who prefers any temporary convenience of a lie, to a broad, safe, and refulgent veracity, that man is too far sunk in the depths of depravity for any religious instruction he can receive in this place;—the canker of disease is gone down to the fountains of his blood, and the days of his life are told.

Truth is sacrificed to a greater variety of causes than the narrow limits of a discourse from the pulpit will allow me to state:—it is sacrificed to boasting, to malice, and to all the varieties of hatred;—it is sacrificed, also, to that verbal benevolence which delights in the pleasure of promising, as much as it shrinks from the pain of performing, which abounds in

gratuitous sympathy, and has words, and words only, for every human misfortune.

I have hitherto considered the love of truth on the negative side only, as it indicates what we are not to do;—the vices from which we are to abstain;—but there is an heroic faith,—a courageous love of truth, the truth of the Christian warrior,—an unconquerable love of justice, that would burst the heart in twain, if it had not vent, which makes women men,—and men saints,—and saints angels.—Often it has published its creed from amid the flames;—often it has reasoned under the axe, and gathered firmness from a mangled body;—often it has rebuked the madness of the people;—often it has burst into the chambers of princes, to tear down the veil of falsehood, and to speak of guilt, of sorrow, and of death.—Such was the truth which went down with Shadrach to the fiery furnace, and descended with Daniel to the lion's den.—Such was the truth which made the potent Felix tremble at his eloquent captive.—Such was the truth which roused the timid Peter to preach Christ crucified before the Sanhedrin of the Jews;—and such was the truth which enabled that Christ, whom he did preach, to die the death upon the cross.

Having thus stated the most ordinary causes of falsehood, I shall endeavour to lay before you the means and the motives for its cultivation. The foundation of the love of truth must be laid, in early education, by unswerving example, and by connecting with truth, every notion of the respect of men, and of the approbation of God; and by combining with the idea of falsehood, the dread of infamy and impiety;—nor must the young be allowed to hesitate about the importance of the particular truth in question, but be taught, rather, that all truth *must* be important; they must never balance, for an instant, between the convenience of falsehood, and the peril of veracity;—but if the alternative be death, or falsehood, let them look upon death as inevitable, as if God had struck them dead with his lightning.

A thorough conviction of the security derived from truth, is no mean incitement to its cultivation. Falsehood subjects us to a perpetual vigilance; we must constantly struggle to reconcile a supposed fact to the current of real events, and to point out the consequences of an ideal cause; the first falsehood must be propped up by a second, the second cemented by a third, till some failure, in the long chain of fictions, precipitates into the gulf of infamy him whom it is intended

to support ;—then there is the perpetual suspicion of being suspected ; we elaborate meaning from idle words, and significance from thoughtless gestures. Watchfulness, silence and melancholy succeed to the gayety of a true heart, and all virtue is gone out of life. This is the bondage of falsehood, and these the massive chains of sin, which, if any man prefer to the liberty of truth, and the Gospel, to the sweet sleeps of virtue, to her free step, to her pleasant thoughts, to her delicious promise of immortal life, he knows not the highest joys of this world, nor merits those of a better world than this.

We shall love truth better if we believe that falsehood is useless; and we shall believe falsehood to be useless if we entertain the notion that it is difficult to deceive ;—the fact is, (and there can be no greater security for well doing than such an opinion,) that it is almost impossible to deceive the great variety of talent, information, and opinion, of which the world is composed. Truth prevails, by the universal combination of all things animate, or inanimate, against falsehood ; for ignorance makes a gross and clumsy fiction ; carelessness omits some feature of a fiction that is ingenious ; bad fellowship in fraud betrays the secret; conscience bursts it into atoms ; the subtlety of angry revenge unravels it ; mere brute, unconspiring matter reveals it; death lets in the light of truth ; all things teach a wise man the difficulty and bad success of falsehood ; and truth is inculcated by human policy, as well as by divine command.

The highest motive to the cultivation of truth, is, that God requires it of us ;—he requires it of us, because falsehood is contrary to his nature,—because the spirit of man, before it can do homage to its Creator, must be purified in the furnace of truth. There is no more noble trial for him, who seeks the kingdom of heaven than to speak the truth ;—often the truth brings upon him much sorrow ; often it threatens him with poverty, with banishment, with hatred, with loss of friends, with miserable old age ; but, as one friend loveth another friend the more if they have suffered together in a long sorrow, so the soul of a just man, for all he endures, clings nearer to the truth ;—he mocks the fury of the people, and laughs at the oppressor's rod ; and if needs be, he sitteth down like Job in the ashes, and God makes his morsel of bread sweeter than the feasts of the liar, and all the banquets of sin.

To carry ourselves humbly and meekly in the world, is a

sure sign of a sound understanding, and an evangelical mind; —but we have duties to perform to ourselves, as well as to others; and there is no one to whom we can owe as much deference as we owe to inward purity, and religious feeling. The submission paid to any human being, by the sacrifice of truth, is not meekness, nor humility, but an abject, unresisting mind, that barters God and heaven for a moment of present ease; and puts to sale man's best birthright of speaking truth;—and the excellence of this virtue of truth consists in this, that it almost necessarily implies so many other virtues, or so certainly leads to them; for he who loves truth, must be firm in meeting those dangers to which truth sometimes exposes him; if he loves truth, he will love justice; he will gain the habit of appealing to the precepts of conscience, and of stating the real conceptions of his own mind, with that disregard to good and evil consequence which those only can feel who look on sin as the highest evil, and obedience to God as the greatest good.

Lastly, remember that other sins can be measured, and the degree of evil, which originates from them, be accurately known;—but no man, when he violates truth, can tell of what sin he is guilty; where his falsehood will penetrate; and what misery it will create. It may calumniate, it may kill, it may embitter, it may impoverish, what evil it may prove you cannot tell; all that you do know is, that it is a crime which injures man, and offends God; therefore, for every reason for which God has chained man up in his particular tendencies to individual sins, for all those reasons he has sanctified, and ordained truth; because, by truth every other virtue is upheld; and upon truth as the deep rock, stand all the glories and excellencies of the human mind. Shake that basis, and with it fall justice to man and piety to God; the frame of social order is broken up, and those talents, and passions are used for mutual destruction, upon which Providence intended that the dignity and sublunary dominion of man should for ever rest.

SERMON IV.

ON THE EDUCATION OF THE POOR.

Wisdom and knowledge shall be the stability of thy times.—ISAIAH XXXIII. VERSE 6.

WE seem to have here something like a prophetic sanction for the propagation of knowledge: Isaiah, in speaking of the future prosperity of the Jewish empire, rests the stability of its fortunes, not upon wealth, nor extensive dominion, but directly upon knowledge. Wisdom, and knowledge, shall be the stability of the times;—as if he had said, you must be brave to be free;—you must be active to be rich; you must be rich to be powerful; but to be stable, to *endure*, you must be taught. Gain all other good which you can, but do not expect to retain them without knowledge:—build upon *that* rock, or though you build splendidly, you build in vain.

As it has fallen to my lot to address you upon the present occasion, I know not what better, or more appropriate to the present occasion* I can do, than to discuss this sentiment of the prophet; and to examine into the effects which knowledge produces upon the welfare of mankind; I do not mean knowledge in general, but that species, and degree of it, which is produced by the education of the poor;—by such investigation, the young people, who are assembled here to-day, will better perceive the nature and scope of those advantages they have received; their charitable guardians will be more confirmed in the utility and importance of their good works; and those who object altogether to the education of the poor, may, perhaps, in the progress of such investigation, be induced to re-consider the validity of those objections upon

* The anniversary at the Foundling Hospital.

which their opposition is founded. I rather prefer this course, than to make general observations on human misery; because, by satisfying the understanding that the thing is right, it becomes more probable that we shall excite something much better than temporary feeling;—benevolence, founded upon reasonable conviction, and leading to judicious exertion.

The most common objection to the education of the lower orders of the community is,—That the poor proud of the distinction of learning, will not submit to the performance of those lower offices of life which are necessary to the well-being of a state: this objection, indeed, I only mention, that I may not be thought to have passed over any objection, for nothing can be more mistaken than to suppose that the laborious classes of the community are laborious from choice, or from any other principle than that of imperious necessity;—a necessity with which education has no more to do than with the motion of the planets, and the flow of the tides;—every person secures to himself as good a situation in society as he can; and it is essentially necessary to the happiness of the world that he should do so.—Those whose lot and heritage fall among the lowest fulfil the duties entailed upon them, and ever must fulfil those duties, from the dread of want for themselves, and for others dearer to them than themselves. Our poorer brethren do not toil because they are ignorant; neither would they cease to toil because they were instructed; the fabric of human happiness God has placed upon much stronger foundations; they labour, because they cannot live without labour;—this has ever been sufficient to stimulate, and to continue the energy of man, and will, and must ever stimulate it, and secure its continuance, while heaven and earth remain.

The next objection, urged against the education of the poor, is, that the most ignorant poor, in country villages, are the best; and that the poor, of large towns, as they gain in intelligence, lose in character, and become corrupt, as they become knowing; but the country poor, it should be remembered, are the fewest in number; they are not exposed to all those innumerable temptations which corrupt the populace of large towns; this, and not their ignorance, is the cause of their superior decency in morals and religion; it is uncandid to oppose the poor of a confined village to the poor of a wealthy and a boundless metropolis; but taking subjects of

comparison from the same spot, and under the same circumstances, do we find that the ignorant of that place are better than the instructed of that place?—Does any man's experience enable him to assert, practically, that there is a connection between uncultivated minds and righteous actions? If we want to make a human being do that which is just, is it necessary to make him think that which is sordid? If we wish him to lift up his soul, in pious adoration, to his Saviour and his God, is it necessary to brutalize that soul which his God has given, and his Saviour redeemed? Is there, can there be any human being who wishes that these children, who come here to return their thanks for the Providence that has watched over them, had been forsaken, passed over; left to the influence of such principles as those by which the minds of the deserted poor are impressed?—No reasonable doubt can be raised; it cannot, with any colour of justice, be contended: every effect of their education which we witness, is a solid gain to society; if temperance can be so called; if truth; if honesty; if a solemn, and deep adoration of the name, and of the laws of our Saviour Jesus Christ, are worthy of that appellation.

In considering the effects of educating the poor, we must not merely dwell upon the power, but upon the tendency which we have created to use that power aright; not merely ask if it is a good thing for the poor to read, but to read such books as are full of wise and useful advice.—A mere instrument for acquiring knowledge may be used with equal success either for a good or a bad purpose; but education never gives the instrument without teaching the proper method of using it, and without inspiring a strong desire to use it in that manner; it raises up powerful associations in favour of righteousness; it gives a permanence of opinion, not to be blown about by every idle breath of doctrine, and some deep life-marks, by which a human being may recover himself, if ever he does wander. To teach a child how he may acquire knowledge, is neither a good nor an evil;—but to fix in his mind, at the same time, a strong bias for the acquisition of that knowledge which makes him a better subject, a better servant, and a better Christian, is the inestimable object sought for, and gained by the education of the poor.—It is in vain to say we did well without educating our poor;—we should never be content with doing well, where there is a rational prospect of doing better.—Besides, what is doing

well?—We do not do well while many of the poor are led to ignominious death for want of education; we do not do well while little children are left to perish;—we do not do well while thousands of unhappy females are perishing in the streets, the victims of artifice acting against deplorable ignorance;—we do not do well while those whose bodies are nourished, are left ignorant of the name of Christ, and of the sacred duties which his Gospel enjoins;—it is to do better than this, that this noble charity was reared; and that the great work of educating the poor is going on throughout this enlightened kingdom, under the protection of God, and by the labours of good and pious men.

Education may easily be made to supply, hereafter, the most innocent source of amusement, and to lessen those vices which proceed from want of interesting occupation;—it subdues ferocity, by raising up an admiration for something besides brutal strength and brutal courage.—If we were told of a poor man's family in the country, that, after the completion of their labours, they amused themselves with reading, could any human being go there, after being acquainted with such a fact, and expect to find more blasphemy, more drunkenness, more indecency, and more ferocity, than among ignorant, illiterate people? The fact is so much the reverse, that it is impossible to know that a human creature can derive pleasure from books, without feeling towards him an increased security and respect. It is some sort of proof that such a man is not a barbarous man; that he does not thirst for blood; that he has heard there is a God; that he has given away bread to the wretched; that he has an house, an altar, and a king.

We must remember, in this question, that all experience is in our favour, that the experiment of educating the poor in the Gospel, as well as in the lower parts of human learning, has been tried in many countries of Europe, to the greatest extent, and with the greatest success.—We must remember, that the question of educating the poor, is not a question between a virtuous education and no education at all; but it is a choice between a good education and a bad one;—you cannot repress the inborn activity of these poor children, and render those minds stagnant which are not progressive to a good point;—you will have weeds to eradicate, if you have not harvests to reap.—You must incur greater trouble and expense hereafter, in punishing their crimes,

than you do now in cherishing their virtues,—you must either teach them the word of Christ, and the law of everlasting life; or you must rage against them with gibbets and chains; and thrust them from the light of the world into the torments of hell.

There are many methods in which a community is considerably benefited by the education of its poor; a human being who is educated, is, for many purposes of commerce, a much more useful and convenient instrument; and the advantage to be derived from the universal diffusion of this power, is not to be overlooked in a discussion of this nature.

The education of the poor sifts the talents of a country, and discovers the choicest gifts of nature in the depths of solitude, and in the darkness of poverty;—for Providence often sets the grandest spirits in the lowest places, and gives to many a man a soul far better than his birth, compelling him to dig with a spade, who had better have wielded a sceptre; education searches everywhere for talents; sifting among the gravel for the gold, holding up every pebble to the light, and seeing whether it be the refuse of Nature, or whether the hand of art can give it brilliancy and price:—There are no bounds to the value of this sort of education: I come here to preach upon this occasion; when fourteen or fifteen youths, who have long participated of your bounty, come to return you their thanks; how do we know that there may not be, among all these, one who shall enlarge the boundaries of human knowledge;—who shall increase the power of his country by his enterprise in commerce;—watch over its safety in the most critical times, by his vigilance as a magistrate;—and consult its true happiness by his integrity, and his ability as a senator? On all other things there is a sign, or a mark;—we know them immediately, or we can find them out; but man, we do not know; for one man differeth from another man as Heaven differs from earth;—and the excellence that is in him, education seeks for with vigilance, and preserves with care.—We might make a brilliant list of our great English characters, who have been born in cottages;—may it ever increase:—there can be no surer sign that we are a wise and a happy people.

I would ask those who place such confidence in the benefits of ignorance, how far they would choose to carry these benefits? for, if the safety of a state depends upon its ignorance,—then, the more ignorance the more safety;—and we

ought to wish the lower orders degraded to the last state of savage stupidity; and if this were done, we forget that such materials must yield to seduction and artifice, as well as to the mandates of lawful empire;—but the particular kind of ignorance such reasoners want, is an ignorance tranquil and submissive to its rulers, and full of active intelligence against those who would mislead it from its duty—an ignorance, which it would, by no means, be desirable to diffuse, if it were possible.

The situation of the poor, in this country, is, with a very few exceptions, perhaps, as good as human nature will permit; upon the number of understandings on which this truth can be impressed, the stability of the times essentially depends;—if, then, we have placed our happiness on the eternal foundations of justice; and if there is a rock beneath our feet, as firm as adamant, and as deep as the roots of the earth, how foolish to rest it upon the crumbling and treacherous soil of ignorance, which every wind can disperse, and every flood can wash away.

I by no means contend, that the government which commands them can have nothing to fear from a people among whom education is widely diffused, because it is idle to say, that a government is ever completely out of all danger from the madness of any people; but I say there is always less to fear from a people whom you have educated in the Gospel, and to whom you imparted also some degree of human knowledge, than from any other people.—If such a people imagine a vain thing in their heart, they are soon called back to duty;—their repentance is speedy, and their excesses are light;—but when a human being rises up against us whom we have degraded to the state of a brute, he rises up against us, as that being would to which we have likened him,—to diffuse slaughter and destruction wherever he bends his steps.

Nothing brutalizes human faculties more than the extreme division of labour; and this division, invaluable to commerce and industry, is carried to such a height in this country, that it calls imperiously for the corrective of education. We are to remember the counteracting power gained by the increased knowledge of their superiors in rank;—all other classes have gained the good to be gained by education; to impart it to this, is not to violate the proportion of the machine, but to maintain it;—to be brief, these are the principles which have always guided the conductors of this charity in the long course

of care and attention which they have paid to the education of the deserted poor, beginning at the earliest infancy, and ending as you now see it end.—Speaking for them, and thinking with them, I say, we believe, that the labour of the poor is founded upon their wants;—that God has commanded us to breed them up diligently in the Gospel;—that the knowledge we are imparting to them, will protect them from that vice which proceeds from idleness;—that it will soften the hard heart, and teach them to respect wisdom more than strength. We are encouraged by all that has been done before, for the propagation of knowledge, and we feel all that confidence which results from experience;—we are convinced there is less toil in teaching duties than in punishing crimes;—we think we are bettering all faculties, inspiring vigorous industry, and valuable enterprise, and giving to great understandings a fair range of action. We think the more employment is simplified, the more the mind of man is degraded, and education rendered necessary,—and we know that in spreading the Word of God, and the mercies of Jesus Christ, we are conferring the most exalted blessings on the poor;—lastly, always, and at all times, we reject ignorance as a dangerous and disgraceful auxiliary, and we say, with the great prophet, *on knowledge, and on wisdom, the stability of the times shall rest.*

SERMON V.

ON THE IMPORTANCE OF PUBLIC WORSHIP.

And they were continually in the temple praising and blessing God.—LUKE XXIV. VERSE 53.

I DO not purpose to recommend, after the model of apostolical righteousness, a devotion so fervid and so incessant as that mentioned in my text; because, though in the early disciples of our Saviour it was a natural consequence of the great events to which they were the witnesses, it would, in us, (if such a stretch of all our faculties, and continued elevation of all our ideas, were possible,) be a deviation from that life of action, in which the perfection of Christianity principally consists; but it may be fairly urged that, by a constant retrospect to these fathers, and founders of the faith, our devotion will be increased and confirmed: (every allowance made for diversity of character and situation,) if prayer was their constant occupation, it should at least be *our* occasional exercise; if there were *no* intervals at which they left the temple, there should be *some* periods at which we approach it; there can be no circumstances which can make an exercise at all times unnecessary to us, which was at every moment indispensable to them.

I lay a great stress upon that part of my text which says they prayed in the temple, not heedlessly, and as every one listed, but at a known and consecrated place, and together; because, as I presume the efficacy and importance of prayer to be admitted, I mean now only to contend, that prayer should be offered up eminently and emphatically, on this day and at this place, in the open church and on the Sabbath; not that other days and other places should be excluded, (God forbid,) but that these should be preferred.

The most ordinary reason alleged for the abstinence from public worship, is the pressure of worldly business: now, it somehow or another happens, that the time most commonly selected to answer the calls of extraordinary occupation, is that which would otherwise be appropriated to the duties of religion; if the enjoyments of pleasure and society were first sacrificed, and then the concerns of religion entrenched upon, a very bad plea would be made a very little better; but the first resource which presents itself to every industrious man is irreligion, and if this is not sufficient, he then begins to think of sacrificing his amusements: to say that the life of any individual is so wholly engrossed by affairs that he cannot subtract from it the small portion of time allotted to public worship, can hardly be true; and if true is disgraceful;—when the will goes along with the understanding, every man finds ample resources in the vigour of his mind; energy increases with difficulty; and the busy, accustomed to a strenuous exertion of their powers, have frequently more leisure than those whose inveterate idleness magnifies every trifle into a serious concern. We may safely say, if the purpose was grateful, the time would be found; but the truth is, that the race is painful, and the goal not pleasant; the means oppress, and the end does not allure; the labour is great and the reward not inviting; and forgetful man, who never defrauds his appetites of a single moment, can find no time for his God.

This plea of want of time, (bad apology as it is for the neglect of public worship,) is, as I have said before, rarely or ever true; the most occupied men have, in general, a considerable share of society and amusement; if friends are to meet together, if vanity is to be gratified by display; if interest is to be promoted by the cultivation of the great; if some new gratification is to be offered to the senses; if curiosity is to be excited; if imagination is to be roused; the wings of time are clipped and the hours no longer fly away. The little intervals set apart for joy, the Sabbaths of pleasure, are ever sacred and inviolable from the business of the world; but when piety asks a moment from these mighty concerns, the merchant hurries to his business, the scholar seizes on his book, and an impious sedulity seems to pervade all ranks and description of men;—one remembers the yoke of oxen that he has purchased; another the wife that he has espoused;

then, and then chiefly, we all seem ready to remember this life at the only period when God has commanded us to forget it.

But, admitting this irresistible multiplicity of affairs, and supposing that the calls which society makes upon the industry and activity of any individual, are as numerous as that individual would wish it to be supposed, it is in every man's power to be a little less rich, a little less powerful, and a little less important; we are not to sacrifice to the Lord our God that which costs us nothing; to give him only the casual refuse of our time, after it has first satisfied every worldly demand; and to offer up the mere relics of existence, susceptible of no higher employment, and worthy of no better use. Consider, I beseech you, what these ceremonies of religion are, to which every little concern of business, pleasure, and profit is preferred;—they are the incorporated worship of all who believe alike in Christ; the union of all who ask from God what they have not, or thank him for what they have; they are the solemn expression of the faith of nations, the overt proof that earth is obedient to heaven; the only public evidence that man is occupied with other things than the brief disquietudes of this perishable globe.

The Gospel loves not a lukewarm heart; it is a religion of feeling and ardour; when it has penetrated into a man's thoughts, as it ought to penetrate, it will produce outward respect, rigid observance, a promptness, and a zeal in worship; it is better in fact to wash off the stain of baptism, to shake the dust of our feet upon the altar, than to revere that which we desert, and deny, by our lives, the God whom we believe in our hearts.

There are men who, without pretending to be so occupied on the Sabbath, allege that it is their only day of relaxation from business, and that it is reasonable enough they should consider it in that point of view.—Such an open preference of pleasure to religion, or the fatal notion that they are so completely opposed to each other, proceeds from an apathy upon these sacred subjects which hardly admits of any cure.—If every exercise which disposes the mind to the contemplation of an hereafter is burthensome, it is impossible religion can exist at all under such a system of thinking. If it is a privilege to be exempt from the duties of religion, of course no one will resort to the temple of God who has the slightest worldly inducement to avert him from it.—The ministers of the Gospel invite men here, because they consider salvation to be the

first and greatest care; they presume, that an occasional recourse to the Christian worship, and the improvement consequent upon that worship, will diffuse over the mind a feeling of calmness and content; and, by strengthening the habit of self-command, render pleasure itself more productive, by rendering it compatible with innocence, and with religion. But the style of thinking against which I am contending, inverts the whole order of human duties, supposing that the first command of the Gospel is to grow rich, or to enjoy the greatest quantity of pleasure which can be procured, and then, if any little residue of leisure remain, that it is to be given to religion;—but, tolerating, for a moment, this fatal, and I must say, this very irreligious style of thinking, and acting; and allowing that a religious institution can, with any colour of reason, be objected to, because it does not furnish its immediate tribute of gratification, it is fair to remind such objectors, of those numbers who, in the pursuit of all common trades and professions, do submit every day to a much more painful, and more considerable, sacrifice of their time and attention. Who rejects the most loathsome disease? who shrinks from the driest forms of law? who turns away in disgust from the dullest calculations?—The mammon of unrighteousness can infuse into us all a meekness and a patience which we are so slow to feel in the service of our God. These feelings are not the feelings of a man, who, in his religion, exhibits the marks of health and life:—a just and good man, when he quits the church, feels that he has performed a duty which he owes to man, and which he owes to his Creator; he has set an example to those who are inferior to him in age and situation; instead of talking about religion, he has practically contributed his share of effort to preserve religion in the world; he has done good to himself also; for a few hours he has put the world out of sight; he has covered his heart in mourning, and in ashes, and given to himself a chance of living better; he has heard those who have told him things, not, perhaps, that he did not know before, but things which would not have occurred to him again if he had not quitted the world, and come here to hear them; he has been honestly and affectionately warned to remember the shortness of human life, and to repent in Christ before the hand of death is upon him. It is not true, that the duties of religion are unpleasant; many men feel a solid and rational comfort from having performed them; they encounter business with a greater plea-

sure; they enjoy amusement with greater satisfaction; they discover that they gain by public worship, the charming feeling of duty well performed, and, therefore, they come back here again at the stated interval to resuscitate that feeling, and to quicken with it the days and hours of common life.

The conclusion that public worship is not essentially necessary to religion, is a conclusion rather of indolence than reason; a conclusion (as is commonly the case in the logic of convenience), born before the premises; first admitted to be true, because it is agreeable; and then proved to be true by the best arguments that can be found: it will, in general, be found, in practice, that those who contend for the possibility of being very religious, without frequenting the service of the church, confine themselves to the mere possibility, without going so far as to convert that possibility into a fact.—Simple indolence and downright impiety we comprehend, and are not ignorant by what species of argument they are to be attacked; but when a man, careless about religion, happens to possess a lively imagination, or to affect it, he speaks as if his feeling spirit could not wing its flights, and pour forth its effusions in a temple built by men's hands; and having drawn fine pictures of an elevated mind, pouring forth the eloquence of pious wonder among rocks and clouds he remains quietly at home, with no mean sense of his own refinement, and with no ordinary contempt for our narrow conformity.—The truth is, if the ordinary season for hearing of temperance, and righteousness, and judgment to come, displeases, the convenient season will never come; if this place is bad, all places are bad; if this hour is irksome, every hour is irksome; we merely ascribe our objections to time and place, and manner, which have their deeper origin in the melancholy encroachment of present gratification, over all the valuable and exalted principles of our nature.

Without public worship, religion could not long subsist; for that which might be done at all times, would be done at no time; or, if private worship were attended to, religion would then depend upon the unassisted talents, and the unrestrained humours of each individual. A rational faith, and a sound practice, would be inflamed by enthusiasm, darkened by superstition, distorted by caprice, or chilled by indifference; for religion has this in it, that it is too often marked by the weakness of old age, or the unquenchable activity of youth; it has too much of the living principle, or too little;

it evaporates into mist, or smites away the barriers of reason with a torrent. The operations of such a mighty principle must not take place in secret; they must be called forth at stated intervals, watched by enlightened guardians, moderated by public opinion, animated by sympathy, and confirmed by example.

Independently of all higher and better reasons, we all ought to know, that the regularity and system of public worship form no inconsiderable part of that basis on which the edifice of social life is placed. Faith in contract, spirit in enterprise, security in possession; a flourishing commerce, a vigorous executive, an obedient people, are blessings much more intimately connected with the Gospel, than the infidel believes, who scorns it because it relates only to a life of eternity.

It sometimes happens, that men abstain from the public worship, because they are ashamed to frequent it;—they are afraid, lest an attention to decencies should be construed into feebleness of understanding;—and, that they should be considered as enslaved to prejudices, because they are obedient to forms;—nay more, by an inverted hypocrisy, they would seem less religious than they really are;—and avoid the character of being devout, while they are enjoying the internal consolations of devotion;—whereas the duty of a sincere Christian is not only to abhor that fame for intellectual vigour and spirit which is evinced by irreligion, but manfully to set at nought the scoffings of impiety; to confess Christ boldly before men; and to come sedulously, and purposely, and constantly, to gain all that discredit, and to incur all that disgrace, which sinners glory in lavishing upon the disciples of Christ. Not making long prayers in the corners of the streets, as the scribes and Pharisees did, for the praise of men; but coming openly to the temple to pray, that you may show the scoffer how little you heed him; and that you are not that fool whom every profligate wretch can sneer out of his salvation.

This negligence of public worship never remains long within the limits to which those who are guilty of it wish to confine it. With what decency, with what hope of success, can the mother pour the blessings of religious instruction into the minds of her children, when they are all contradicted by the example of him whom they are bound, and instructed most reverently, to love? While we talk of bad books and

bad principles, we overlook these lessons of impiety, which masters and parents are perpetually reading to those who are influenced by their example; and then we make scape-goats of a few popular and infidel writers, and lay the profaneness of the age to their charge.

The preservation of public worship every man owes to his own immediate happiness;—he owes it to the vigour and purity of his religious character, and to his progress in the true knowledge of the Gospel; but if blind to these, he must, at least, see that he owes to it the preservation of social order, and that it is his interest to cling to it as the strongest barrier of industry and of peace. See what dreadful pictures are drawn in the Scriptures, of the state of a people among whom religion is universally neglected.—When a people are turned away from the worship of the Lord their God, Peace fleeth away from the midst of that people, and they are given up to famine, and the sword;—there are no joyful harvests in the land,—no bleating of the flocks,—no cheerful noise of the artificer.—The right hand forgets its cunning,—the brow is not moistened with labour;—they speak not of the furrows of the field, nor glory in the goad;—but dreadful lusts rise up in those times, and God turneth men over to the devices of their own hearts.—These are the days in which the needy are forsaken;—and the fatherless oppressed:—then it goeth hard with just men,—then the widow is spoiled, then the blood of innocents is shed:—Come, then, under the roof of the Almighty, and gather yourselves under the shadow of his wings.—The public worship of God is the ancient, and the sure guardian of human happiness:—do not trifle with it as if it were of no avail; justice, and faith, and mercy, and kindness, flow from the altars of God,—it is here that men learn to pity;—it is here that they are taught to forgive;—it is here that they learn punctuality in contracts, obedience to magistrates, submission to superiors, respect for laws, loyalty to kings; and there, above all, it is, that they catch that true spirit of the Gospel, which, meliorating all things, makes submission to superiors voluntary, by rendering superiors gracious,—respect for laws natural, by making laws just,—the loyalty to kings pleasant, by making kings good.

SERMON VI.

ON FAST DAY.

February, 1808.

Sanctify ye a fast; call a solemn assembly; gather the elders, and all the inhabitants of the land, into the house of the Lord our God, and cry unto the Lord.—JOEL I. VERSE 14.

FASTING has, in all ages and among all nations, been an exercise much in use in times of mourning and affliction. There is no example of fasting, properly so called, before the time of Moses; yet it is presumable, the patriarchs had recourse to that religious exercise, since we see that there were very great mournings among them; such as that of Abraham for Sarah, and Jacob for his son, Joseph. Moses enjoins no particular fast, in his five books, excepting that on the solemn day of expiation, which was generally and strictly observed. "On the tenth day of the seventh month, ye shall afflict your souls." After the time of Moses, examples of fasting were very common among the Jews. Joshua, and the elders, remained prostrate before the ark, from morning until evening, after the children of Israel were defeated by the men of Ai. The eleven tribes, which had taken up arms against that of Benjamin, seeing they could not hold out against the inhabitants of Gibeah, fell down upon the ark, upon their faces, and, in this manner, continued until the evening without food. The very heathens, sometimes, fasted; and the King of Nineveh, terrified with the preaching of Jonas, made an order, that not only man but beast also, should continue without food from the rising to the setting of the sun. And the Jews, in the times of public calamity, made even children at the breast fast. It does not appear, from the practice of

our Saviour, and his disciples, that he instituted any particular fast, or enjoined any to be kept out of pure devotion; but when the Pharisees reproached him that his disciples did not fast as often as their disciples, or as the disciples of John the Baptist, his reply is, "Can ye make the children of the bridegroom fast, while the bridegroom is with them: but the day shall come when the bridegroom shall be taken away from them, and then shall they fast in those days:" clearly pointing out a future age of the church, when fasting would be a proper and expedient institution. Fasting is, likewise, confirmed by our Saviour's sermon on the mount, though not as a stated, yet as an occasional duty of Christians, that through these means, they might strengthen their sense of dependence upon divine Providence, and humble their souls before the afflicting hand of God. This is a slight sketch of that Scriptural practice, and those Scriptural authorities upon which the institution of fasting depends. It has, in itself, this peculiar good, that it provokes attention, by interrupting ordinary habits; the flow of business, and pleasure, is on a sudden stopped; the world is thrown into gloom, and a certain solemnity of thought obtruded upon those whose outward senses must be influenced, before their inward hearts can be moved. *The people of Nineveh believed in God and proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest to the lowest; and the king arose from his throne, and laid his robe from him, and covered him with sackcloth, and sat in ashes, and cried night and day unto God.*

The object, then, of this day, is to confess our sins and to repent of them; and, consequently, the object of the ministers of the Gospel, on this day, is to state what those sins are, what are their consequences, and how they may be avoided.

Sins may be considered under a twofold division; those which individuals always commit, which are the consequence of our fallen state, and inseparable from our frail nature; and those which are the result of any particular depravity, existing in a greater degree at this time than at any other time, or in this country, than among any other people.

With respect to the first class of sins, though the utmost degree of exertion of which we are capable, can never carry us to the perfection which the Gospel requires, or make us worthy of the mercy which it holds forth, still it is right to remind mankind of those imperfections, inherent in their nature, lest they should relax from the exertions of which they

are really capable;—to show, to the best of human creatures, that they are still miserable sinners, checks that arrogance which is so apt to rise up in our hearts; compels us to turn our minds away from the imperfect examples of goodness we can meet with here, and to lift them up to that image of purity which makes our goodness more energetic, more prolific, and more permanent: to put us out of conceit with our own exertions, preserves that feeling of dependence upon an higher power, which is the preservation of our present, and the pledge of our future happiness. If our Saviour had told us, as human philosophers have told us, that good men were glorious and dignified; if he had dwelt perpetually upon the grandeur and importance of virtue; upon what cheap and easy terms would men have been contented with themselves; —how soon would these notions of their own dignity have broken that chain which reaches from the heart of man to the throne of God.—The Gospel now says there are eternal rewards, and there are eternal punishments; to gain the one and to avoid the other, you must do good; but you must add to that goodness the deepest humility and the firmest dependance upon the help of God. You must not look backward upon what you have done, but forward upon what you have to do. You must consider not the little difference between you and the rest of your species, but the immeasurable interval between you and the highest purity; and you must gather from these reflections, that humility of righteousness which will make you desirous of doing more, by making you dissatisfied with what you have done. All this good naturally follows from the doctrine of man's fallen nature; from the profound humility which the Gospel enjoins to him; and from the impossibility under which we are now so wisely placed, of claiming any merit from our actions, except through the mercy and mediation of Christ.

Quitting this subject, and coming now to that part of our conduct which is invariable, to that small and contracted sphere in which it is allotted to us to do better, or do worse, I shall begin with the subject of religion; and here the great evil to deplore, and the afflicting circumstance which cannot but be noticed by every true friend of the orthodox church, is that prodigious increase of sectaries, of all ranks and descriptions, which are daily springing up in this kingdom, and falling off from the mother church;—these men seem to think that the spirit of religion consists in a certain fervid irritability

of mind; and that agitation and eagerness are the most acceptable sacrifices which they can make to their Creator;—the calm address of the Established Church is, in their estimation, a species of impiety; and, before he prays to the God of heaven and earth, an human being must lash himself up into wildness and enthusiasm.

Another unfortunate peculiarity of these seceders from the Established Church is, that they are always straining at gnats, always suspecting happiness, always casting over religion an air of something bordering upon that which is frivolous and vexatious; degrading the majesty of the Gospel, and painting the Lord of all things as a God of trifles and narrow observances; as a God raging forever against those most trivial omissions, which even the best and ablest of his creatures can forget and forgive. But the most fatal of all errors which proceeds from this modern fanaticism, is the contempt and the horror which they express for all the practical doctrines of Christianity insisted upon from the pulpit; the zeal with which they cry down any attempt to render men better in their daily conduct, and to produce some actual useful improvement. We might suppose, from such notions of the Christian faith, that Christianity was a set of speculative disquisitions, where, if a man agreed only with the barren and useless results, he was left in liberty to follow the devices of his own heart, and to lead what manner of life his fancy or his passions might dictate. It is evangelical, according to these notions, to preach to men of high and exalted mysteries; it is unevangelical to warn men against pride, against anger, against avarice, against fraud, against all the innumerable temptations by which we are hurried away from our duty to our Creator, and from the great care of salvation. All these subjects it is now in the practice of fanatics to call by the name of moral, as if they had nothing to do with the Gospel, as if (as I before observed), the Gospel busied itself only with some unfruitful propositions, and remained quite passive at, and unconcerned by the actions of mankind. But let any man turn to his Gospel, and see if there is a single instance of our blessed Saviour's life, where he does not eagerly seize upon every opportunity of inculcating something practical, of bringing some passion under subjection, of promoting the happiness of the world, by teaching his followers to abstain from something hurtful; and to do something useful.—The effort, and the object, of our blessed Saviour, are always to draw some inference,

and to make some application from the events before him;—the most practical book that ever was written is the Gospel; and the great point where it differs from human morals, is, that human morals say, do so for present convenience, and the Gospel says, do so for eternal reward;—human morals say, do so because it has appeared to wise men to be the best rule of life; the Gospel says, do so because it is the will of God;—they both say do it, but they differ in the authority, and the motive, as much as Omniscience differs from frailty, and Eternity from time. But the moment fanatical men hear anything plain and practical introduced into religion, then they say this is secular, this is worldly, this is moral, this is not of Christ.—I am sure you will think with me, that the only way to know Christ, is not to make our notions his notions, or to substitute any conjectures of our own as to what religion ought to be, for an humble and faithful inquiry of what it is.—The books which contain the word of life are open before us, and every one may judge of their nature and object; if they consisted of lofty and sentimental effusion; if they indulged in subtle disquisition, then, perhaps, it might be our duty to appear before you, sometimes with disordered feelings, sometimes with the spirit of profound investigation; but the ministers of the Established Church are practical in their doctrines, because the Scriptures which they explain are practical; when they attack any vice to which the nature of man is subjected, they conceive themselves to be punctually fulfilling the commands of their great master;—they do not believe that you will call for Tabana, and Farfar, and the rivers of Damascus, because God has commanded you to wash in the waters of Israel; they do not imagine you will ask for mystery, when it has pleased God to give you that which is simple and intelligible; they cannot doubt but that you will remember, though morals and religion teach us abstinence from the same crimes, that abstinence, in the one case, is a question of prudence; in the other, a question of salvation;—in the one case, we only believe the rule to be right, in the other, we are sure it is right. Can any man, however fond of opposing morals to religion, suppose that the practical duties, which may be found in the Gospel, were first taught to mankind by the Gospel? does he imagine that there were not ten thousand books before the coming of our Saviour, which said, do not kill; do not commit adultery; cultivate benevolence; moderate pride; follow the rules of temperance? Our

Saviour did not come to preach new discoveries to mankind; but to give to the rules of conduct, which men had discovered by the light of nature, the higher authority and the more powerful motives of religion. How, then, is it possible to comply with those unreasonable persons, who require something totally different from moral rules, before they will allow that you are saying anything about religion? A moralist and a religionist must both equally inculcate charity and forgiveness of injuries; when you hear the one, you say it is prudent, and expedient to act so; when you listen to the other, all the sublimity of good and evil is before you, and you are moved by an eternity of joy and pain. I have dwelt long upon this erroneous notion of religion, because it is one of the most useful weapons of fanaticism, and is daily producing much practical mischief.

There is a contrary excess in matters of religion, not less fatal than fanaticism, and still more common: I mean that languor and indifference upon serious subjects which characterize so great a part of mankind; not speculative disbelief, not profligate scoffing against religion, not incompliance with the ceremonies it enjoins; but no penetration of Christianity into the real character; little influence of the Gospel upon the daily conduct: a cold, careless, and unfruitful belief. Let it be our care to steer between these opposite extremes; to be serious without being enthusiastic; and to be reasonable without being cold;—alike to curb the excesses of those who have zeal without discretion, and to stimulate the feelings of others, who have conformity without zeal; remembering always that everything intended to endure, must be regulated by moderation, discretion and knowledge.

In looking abroad, my brethren, to consider the relation which this country bears to the other nations of the world, and the probable destiny which awaits it, it is impossible not to tremble at the perilous uncertainty of human affairs, and to bow before the judgments of Almighty God. The state of the world is like the vision of a sick man, and the thoughts of a dreamer of dreams, when he is awakened by the light of the morning;—the pageantry of the earth is vanished away, and the powers and principalities which existed in the days of our youth, known only by their names, are still fast fading away from the memory of mankind. All these have fallen before the bad ambition of him who is directing against us the last efforts of his genius and his power; a man powerful

to do evil, not wise, and far-sighted; and patient enough to do good; not caring for, not wishing it; dedicated to universal conquest and destruction; wishing only to walk over the smoking ashes of the world, and to be remembered by future ages as a passing storm. In the midst of this outward wretchedness, we enjoy, in this island, the internal spectacle of a people, unanimous in discharging the great duties which they owe to their country, and quite prepared to submit to every privation, if the only price of quiet affluence is submission to indignity. If it is beautiful to behold this, it is still more pleasing to reflect upon the causes by which that unanimity has been occasioned; to remember those laws which have long administered equal justice to the rich and poor, that constitution which has defined the power of those who govern, and the privileges of those who are governed; and that church, which for three centuries has been instilling the precepts of justice and manly piety into the hearts of the people. These are beautiful institutions, which have always been praised, but are now felt; they are the institutions which have kept us in life, and strength, amid the ruin of nations, that had nothing to fight for but the caprices of their tyrants; and nothing to guide them but the superstitions of their false religion;—these are principles which must secure to us a safe existence, or a majestic fall; if our sun does set, it will set in splendour; if we are to be blotted out from the powers of the world, we shall light up, in ages yet unborn, the flame of freedom; whenever the fullness of our time is come, we shall leave behind us a page of history, which will appal tyrants, instruct the wise, and animate the brave; we shall teach mankind, that the sword is used abroad with the greatest strength where the sceptre is wielded at home with the most perfect justice;—we shall teach them, that in the great convulsions of the world, the people which remain the longest, and suffer the least, are those who are excited to resistance by a sense of the enjoyments which they are about to lose, and who are inured to a confidence in Almighty God, by the precepts of a wise, a temperate, and a feeling piety.

SERMON VII.

ON THE UTILITY OF MEDITATING ON DEATH.

I protest, by your rejoicing, which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die daily.—1 Corinthians xv. verse 31.

Thus it is that the apostle brought daily before his mind the consideration of his death; of that period which was to terminate the good and evil of his days; and to bring him before his Saviour, and his Judge. He exerted his ardent imagination to banish the consciousness of life and health, to summon up images of sorrow, and to draw a true portrait of that solemn and suffering day. Let us see, after the example of this great minister of the Gospel, if there be not some wisdom in cherishing, and dwelling upon, these occasional feelings and in spreading this gloom over the soul; a gloom which, like the shadow of Peter's body, gives life and strength to whatever it obscures. The general subject, then, of my discourse, will be a consideration of the utility which is to be derived from the meditation on death; for there is a sorrow the end whereof is joy; and eternal laughter leadeth to destruction. It is better, sometimes, to steal from the gladness of the feast,—to stop the joy of the harp,—to quench the splendour of the lamp,—to put off the wedding garment,—and to speak of the wretchedness of the grave. The time must come when this soul and body shall be rent in twain,—I must lay on my last bed; and the darkness of death shall hide me from my beloved companions. The day must come, but I know not when; the feet of them which have buried my kindred are at the door;—it may be, they shall carry me out.

One great advantage of the meditation on death is, that it

teaches us to value all earthly things aright; and perpetually corrects the fallacy of our calculations, by reminding us of the period to which they apply;—it discourages those schemes of fraud, injustice and ambition, the fruits of which are distant, by reminding us, that that distance we may never reach, —that death, which cuts short the enjoyment, leaves us with the whole load of guilt, because that depends on the design; whereas, it gives the freest scope to virtuous exertions, because they have their full merit with our Heavenly Judge, however they may be interrupted by the uncertainty of human life. See what we sacrifice every day to wealth and power, for want of due meditation on death; and how apt we are to forget, that the fruits of our crimes remain but for the passing moment;—when comfort, and peace of mind, and proud integrity, are all yielded up, we cannot enjoy even a few years of tranquil corruption;—we have yielded up all, and it is now time to yield up the ghost;—secure to me, for whole centuries, the wages of iniquity,—stop in me the gradual waste of life,—guard me from the stalking pestilence,—place me on the pinnacle of power, and show me, beneath my feet, all the pleasures of the world; and then ask me to pawn my soul unto sin;—but if I do the thing which is evil to day, to-morrow thou canst not save me from death,—and the wasting fever may not leave me one moment of guilty renown.

Meditation on death improves the mind, by destroying in it trifling discontents, and by blunting the force of all the malevolent passions;—the feelings of malice, jealousy and hatred cannot co-exist with the prospect of the last hour, with the notion of a new world, and the terror of a just God;—the thought of an eternal parting subdues hatred, and produces, in miniature, all the effects of a real scene of death; it diminishes the importance of the offence we have suffered, awakens that candour which self-love has set to sleep, and makes us think, not of the trifling scenes which are past, but of the awful events which are to come. Such a disposition of mind severs, at once, all the little and unworthy attachments to life, and prevents us from grieving at small evils, from the lively representation which it makes, that they cannot endure; that we are hastening on to something better, and greater; and, that it is beneath the wisdom and firmness of man to weep and lament for that which is as brief in duration as it is insignificant in effect.

Meditation on death aggrandizes the mind, as the near approach of death itself is commonly accustomed to do;—for, though men are accused of acting on their death-bed, they usually act greatly, and evince an heroism of which their lives have afforded little or no symptom. For what are the last scenes we witness of dying men? A forgiveness of injuries, which should have been forgiven years before; an avowal of faults, which should have been avowed and rectified before half the race of life was run; a confession of Christ, who had been denied before the world; sudden and sublime flashes of wisdom, piety, and magnanimity, which bear no relation to the previous life, but indicate how awful, and how omnipotent are the warnings of death.

If the distant contemplation of death cannot so effectually inspire us with godly thoughts, it, at least, leaves us greater time for godly actions;—whatever seeds it casts into the mind may spring up and fructify; none of its energies need be barren; death frustrates none of its admonitions; the feeblest thought of piety has time to expand itself into a wise and active system of good works.

Meditation on death induces us to consider by what means we shall avert its terrors; when our hour is come we cannot discover that the ordinary objects of human desire, and the ordinary sources of human gratification, will be then of any avail; and we are thus led by an happy foresight, to lay up the remembrance of good actions, even when the last day is still far distant from us. Can we figure to ourselves anything more dreadful than an human being at the brink of death, who has never once reflected that he is to die? To hear those cries of anguish, to which nothing human can now minister relief?—to behold him looking up to the warm sun, and clinging to the cheerful world in vain?—give him but another year,—but a month,—but a day,—and he will make some preparations for death! The widow's heart shall sing with joy, and the hungry be filled with good things;—this is the unspeakable wretchedness, and this the horrid surprise which it is the great business of Christian wisdom to avoid. Let us rather, in the middle period of youth and strength, when the evil day is yet far off, commune with our own hearts in the stillness of our chambers, and gather a decent firmness for that trial; and when we pass through this shadow of death, let our minds be pure from every bad passion, as they must be at the true death; and when we have

meditated on these things, and forgiven all injuries, and purposed benevolent deeds, and filled our minds full of fear, and fair love, and holy hope, we shall go back with new hearts and pleasures unknown before, to the common scenes of life.

But the greatest of all advantages to be derived from the meditation on death, is the prospect of that eternity to which it leads,—a reflection which is the support of every suffering, the soul of every pleasure, and the source of every virtue;—it prevents that weariness which the sameness of life is so apt to produce; it gives a motive for enduring sorrow, and for conquering passion, by opening a boundless region to the fancy; it promises ease to every pain, gratification to every desire, and enjoyment to every hope. In the contemplation of a second existence the persecuted man figures to himself a state of rest; the poor, an exemption from want; the sick, health; the weak, power; the ignorant, knowledge; the timid, safety; the mean, glory. In the contemplation of eternity, that which is broken is bound up;—that which is lost is restored;—that which is quenched is lighted again;—the parent looks for his lost child across the great gulf; the wretched widow thinks she shall see the husband of her youth; the soul, filled with holy wishes, lifts itself up to the great Author of our being, who has sanctified and redeemed us by the blood of Christ; who has given cheerfulness and dignity to our existence, and made the short agonies of death a sure prelude to immortal life.

But we must not make our comparison between voluntary meditation on death, and the total seclusion of the idea; the choice is, shall we meditate voluntarily on death, as a religious exercise, or shall we be haunted by the image of death, as a terrific spectre? Shall we gain wisdom and innocence by meeting the danger, or shall we, like children, be bribed by the tranquillity of a moment, to keep it off? The image of death follows the man who fears it, over sea and land; it rises up at feasts and banquets; no melody can suit it; no sword and spear can scare it away; it is undaunted by the sceptre, or the crown;—the rich man may add field to field, and heap vineyard upon vineyard, and make himself alone upon the earth, but death's image strides over his towers, and walks through his plains, and breaks into his nightly bed, and fills his soul with secret fear! All men suffer from the dread of death; it is folly to hope you can escape it.—Our business is

to receive the image, to gaze upon it, to prepare for it, to seek it; and, by these means, to disarm.

It is the greatest of all errors, to attempt to escape this feeling, by averting the mind from it; and there are many consolations, which the steady contemplation of it affords, by which the magnitude of its terrors is circumscribed, and the idea of death rendered more tolerable to the mind of man.

In our sympathy with the dead, we think not so much of the real importance of their situation; of the awful futurity which awaits them from the judgment of their Saviour; but we think it miserable for them to be deprived of the sight of the sun; to be shut out from human intercourse, and laid in the cold grave, a prey to corruption, and the reptiles of the earth; to be no more thought of in this world, but to be obliterated, in a little time, from the memory of their dearest friends and relations;—the happiness of the dead, however, is affected by none of these things; nor is it such circumstances which can disturb their profound repose; they are sleeping in their dust, unconscious of the mouldering scene around them; nor will they awaken any more, till the last trumpet calls them to the judgment of Christ. Therefore, reflection may at once cut off all this outward scenery of death; whatever it is, the dead know it not; nor is it wise to inflame, by all the terrors of imagination, an evil in which there are so many realities to dread; neither are we to suppose that death, coming at last, is so unwelcome as our fancy, viewing it at a distance, would lead us to suppose;—long sickness induces a weariness of life; the body is comfortless in old age; and it deadens the mind; our friends are all gone before us; perhaps our kindred, and our children; every succeeding year dissolves some tie which binds us to the world; extinguishes some affection; annihilates some power; weakens some appetite; impairs some excellence; so that we perish, day after day, till little of the true man remains, and the grave has but a small portion to receive.

Meditation on death teaches us, that the evil is not without its remedy; that foresight can diminish that evil; that it is an evil which may be brought within the compass of our own sway and dominion; and that, though we must all die, it rests with us to determine upon the feelings with which we shall die, by adopting that course of actions from which those feelings must proceed;—and this appears to me to be the great use and purpose of thinking on death; not to think

of that damp earth, and that dreary tomb, and those childish terrors, of which the dead feel and know nothing; but to impress upon our hearts this truth, that, through Christ, we are become the lords of death, and masters over all the sorrow and lamentation which death carries in its train; that the mere separation of matter and spirit is a pang of so short a moment, that it is hardly a rational object of fear; that the real pang is the remembrance of a misspent life; of every act that has been cruel, unkind, and unjust; of time dissipated; talents misapplied; man injured; and God forgotten. If you think the accumulation of such thoughts and such recollections as these, is awful, take care that they do not accumulate; if you dread such agonies of spirit, look to their origin, and to their cause; remember the great apostle; draw near to God, while all the pleasures of the world are yet before you; give up to him some portion of youth and health; wait not till disease enables you to offer up only the remnants and leavings of life; but die daily, before half your career is run; anticipate the last day; imagine a mighty God; adore his purity; supplicate his mercy; tremble at his power;—be not so rash, and so mad, as to let the salvation of your souls depend upon whether the air of this day is noxious, or pure; whether the blasts of heaven shall be a little too damp, or a little too cold; but be always ready for death; think, like a man engaged in warfare, that you cannot call an hour your own; and be assured of this, that death, mere animal death, is nothing; it is often better than life, and thousands welcome its approach; but the sting of death is sin, and we know that victory which Christ has gained over sin, by dying daily; therefore, we may tear out that sting, and welcome a gentle death, as the end of every sorrow, and the harbinger of greater and nobler joys.

SERMON VIII.

FOR THE BLIND.

Truly, the light is sweet, and a pleasant thing it is for the eyes to behold the sun.—Ecclesiastes xi. verse 7.

If any man were to require, at my hands, a proof of the authenticity of that Gospel by the principles of which we have this day been edified, and in obedience to which we are now gathered together, after I had laid before him the cogent and the luminous reasoning which men, mighty in the Scriptures, have put forth to confound impiety, and to resolve doubt, after I had read to him the words of that Saviour who spake as never man spake before, after I had strove by these means to teach him that, though shrouded in the tomb, he would behold his Redeemer on the last day, I would turn to the daily life, and the daily mercies of Christians; I would say, let us judge the tree by its fruit; if it is productive only of idle ceremonies and trifling observances, hew it down, and cast it into the flames: but if it can cause the lame to walk, the leper to be cleansed, the deaf to hear, and the blind to receive their sight,—if it brings forth, in their due season, the fruits of mercy, then is that tree planted by God,—then are its roots too deep for the tempest,—then shall its branches flourish to the clouds,—then shall all the nations of the earth gather under its shade.

Try it, then, by this test; refer the proofs of the Gospel's authenticity to the criterion of active provident compassion. —It studies classes, and relieves every misery of our nature; it is not sufficient for the refined, and zealous benevolence of these times, to confuse the varieties of misfortune, by extending the same indiscriminate aid to sufferers, who agree in nothing but the common characteristic of grief;—each indi-

vidual calamity experiences a distinct compassion, is cherished with its appropriate comforts, and healed by its specific remedies.—The maniac is shut out from the tumults of the world, the Magdalene weeps over the Gospel of Christ, and washes his name with her tears ;—a mother is given to the foundling,—a Samaritan to the wounded,—the drowned person is called back from the dead,—the forsaken youth is snatched from the dominion of vice,—a soul is breathed into the deaf and dumb,—and the child-bearing woman, when she thinks of the days of her anguish, knoweth that she has where to lay her head. In every corner of this Christian country, some edifice rises up consecrated to mercy ;—a vast hospital, a place of wounds and anguish,—a tabernacle of healing, ample enough to call down the blessings of God upon a city, and to wipe out half their sins. In the midst of this magnificent benevolence, the children of the Gospel have not forgotten the misfortunes of the blind ; they have pitied their long darkness, and remembered that the light is sweet, that it is a pleasant thing for the eyes to behold the sun.

The object of the society for which I am now to implore your protection, is to diminish the misfortune of blindness, by giving to those afflicted with it, the means of obtaining support by their ingenuity and labour, and of walking in the law of Christ, by attending to the religious instructions and exercises prescribed by this institution. They are instructed in a variety of works for which manual skill is requisite, rather than bodily labour, and which they perform with a dexterity astonishing to those who have connected with blindness the notion of absolute helplessness and incapacity.

A charitable institution, conducted upon such principles as the asylum for the blind, is superior to any common charity, as it interweaves science with compassion ; and, by showing how far the other senses are capable of improvement, takes off from the extent of human calamity all that it adds to the limits of human knowledge. Who could have imagined, to speak of a kindred instance of ingenious benevolence, that the deaf and dumb could be taught to reason, to speak, and to become acquainted with all the terms and intricate laws of a language; or that men, who had never, from their earliest infancy, enjoyed the privilege of sight, could be taught to read and to write ; to print books, and the ablest of them to penetrate into all the depths of mathematical learning ? Such

facts afford inexhaustible encouragement to men engaged in the benevolent task of instructing those in whom the ordinary inlets of knowledge are blocked up.—They seem to place within our reach the miracles of those Scriptures from whence they have sprung, and to show the fervent votary of Christ, that he, also, like his great Master, can make the deaf hear, the dumb speak, and the blind see.

Consider the deplorable union of indigence and blindness, and what manner of life it is from which you are rescuing these unhappy people; the blind man comes out in the morning season to cry aloud for his food;—when he hears no longer the feet of men he knows that it is night, and gets him back to the silence and the famine of his cell. Active poverty becomes rich; labour and prudence are rewarded with distinction: the weak of the earth have risen up to be strong; but he is ever dismal, and ever forsaken! The man who comes back to his native city after years of absence, beholds again the same extended hand into which he cast his boyish alms; the self-same spot, the old attitude of sadness, the ancient cry of sorrow, the intolerable sight of a human being that has grown old in supplicating a miserable support for a helpless, mutilated frame,—such is the life these unfortunate children would lead, had they no friend to appeal to your compassion,—such are the evils we will continue to remedy, if they experience from you that compassion which their magnitude so amply deserves.

The author of the book of Ecclesiastes has told us that the light is sweet, that it is a pleasant thing for the eyes to behold the sun; the sense of sight is, indeed, the highest bodily privilege, the purest physical pleasure, which man has derived from his Creator: To see that wandering fire, after he has finished his journey through the nations, coming back to us in the eastern heavens; the mountains painted with light; the floating splendour of the sea; the earth waking from deep slumber; the day flowing down the sides of the hills, till it reaches the secret valleys; the little insect recalled to life; the bird trying her wings; man going forth to his labour; each created being moving, thinking, acting, contriving according to the scheme and compass of its nature; by force, by cunning, by reason, by necessity,—is it possible to joy in this animated scene and feel no pity for the sons of darkness? for the eyes that will never taste the sweet light? for the poor, clouded in everlasting gloom?—If you ask me

why they are miserable and dejected, I turn you to the plentiful valleys; to the fields now bringing forth their increase; to the freshness and the flowers of the earth; to the endless variety of its colours; to the grace, the symmetry, the shape of all it cherishes, and all it bears; these you have forgotten because you have always enjoyed them; but these are the means by which God Almighty makes man what he is; cheerful, lively, erect; full of enterprize mutable, glancing from Heaven to earth; prone to labour and to act.—Why was not the earth left without form and void? Why was not darkness suffered to remain on the face of the deep? Why did God place lights in the firmament for days, for seasons, for signs, and for years?—that he might make man the happiest of beings, that he might give to this his favourite creation a wider scope, a more permanent duration; a richer diversity of joy: this is the reason why the blind are miserable and dejected, because their soul is mutilated and dismembered of its best sense; because they are a laughter and a ruin, and the boys of the streets mock at their stumbling feet; therefore I implore you, by the Son of David, have mercy on the blind: if there is not pity for all sorrows, turn the full and perfect man to meet the inclemency of fate: let not those who have never tasted the pleasures of existence, be assailed by any of its sorrows;—the eyes which are never gladdened by light should never stream with tears.

Nothing is more commonly known, than that those who are born blind cannot form the smallest notion of colours and of light; it is impossible, however, they should hear the pleasures derivable from sight so frequently spoken of by others, without comparing them with other sources of gratification with which they happen to be acquainted; it is an affecting and interesting circumstance in the annals of one* who had himself been blind from his infancy, that the similitude he was always apt to frame for the unknown pleasures of sight, were the pleasures of virtue and religion to his pious and ardent imagination; the landscape of the evening was like the close of a well spent life; friendship and pity were the full stream and the green pasture; the Gospel was the day spring from on high.

There is a pleasure in the sight of the human countenance, greater than any derived from the contemplation of those

* Dr. Blacklock.

objects to which we bear a cold and a distant relation; it is pleasant to the heart of man to be met with looks of kindness and regard; to see a countenance that promises support in the evil day, that reminds us of ancient attachments, and family love: that carries the awful signs of those feelings and passions which must influence our future fate. Which of you that expects to see a long absent brother, or a child returning from the perils of war and of distant lands; which of you would forego the pleasure of tracing every lineament of his face, and reading on his features the language of deep and ardent affection? Ask of these unhappy children what they would sacrifice that they might see, were it only for an instant, the mother that nursed them; the guide that led them out; the brother that has treated them kindly and gently in their infant days? But brother, and parent, and guide, and friend, are one to them; they know not the signs of nature, the looks of mercy, and the smiles of love.

Another source of misery to the blind, is their defenceless weakness of body; they can neither foresee evil, ascertain its nature, nor avert its consequences. If they venture a step from their usual haunts, every spot on which they tread is pregnant with some new danger;—the earth seems to them a continued precipice.—The blind, says a very excellent writer, who had himself never enjoyed the blessing of sight; the blind not only may be, but actually are, during a considerable period, apprehensive of danger in every motion towards any place from whence their contracted powers of perception give them no intelligence. All the various modes of delicate proportion; all the beautiful varieties of lights and colours; whether exhibited in the works of nature, or of art; are to them irretrievably lost;—dependent for everything, except mere subsistence, on the good offices of others; obnoxious to injury from every point, which they are neither capacitated to receive, nor qualified to resist, they are, during the present state of being, rather prisoners at large, than citizens of nature.

To estimate the advantages of sight, or of any other blessing coeval with life, we should call in the force of constrast, and consider what the condition of man would have been, had it pleased God to create him without it. Devoid of sight, man would acquire his knowledge of the properties of bodies, slowly, singly, and with extreme uncertainty;—the sluggish current of his ideas would render him unfit for enterprize, his

submission to every danger passive, or his opposition fruitless and confused;—some faint intelligence he would derive from sound; but he could receive few accurate notions from any greater distance than he could reach. From all that knowledge of bodies which we derive from an acquaintance with their affinities to light; and which, to us, are the signs of vigour and decay, salubrity and harm; youth and age; hatred and love; he would be eternally precluded;—his mind must necessarily be exercised upon diminutive objects; because, though a long-continued series of touches would give him an accurate notion of each part touched, he could not, from such disconnected intelligence, collect the notion of a single individual mass. The works of God thus broken into baubles, and given to him bit by bit, what can this truncated, mutilated being know of the wisdom and power of his Creator?—Open to him now the visible world; he penetrates into distant space;—he sees, at one glance, millions of objects;—he views the breadth, and depth, and altitude of things;—he perceives there is a God among the aged streams, and the perpetual mountains, and the everlasting hills.

My brethren, as no other topic worthy of your attention presses upon me, I conclude with recommending most earnestly these distressed objects to your notice; and I remind you how merciful our blessed Saviour was wont to show himself to their afflictions. Blind Bartimeus sat by the way-side begging; and, as the crowd passed by, he cried, with a loud voice, "Thou son of David have mercy on me." Jesus stopped the multitude; and, before them all, restored him to his sight. The first thing that he saw, who never saw before, was the Son of God. These blind persons, like Bartimeus, will never see, till they behold their Redeemer on the last day; not as he then was, in his earthly shape, but girded by all the host of heaven;—the judge of nations;—the everlasting counsellor;—the prince of peace. At that hour, this heaven and earth will pass away, and all things melt with fervent heat;—but, in the wreck of worlds, no tittle of mercy shall perish, and the deeds of the just shall be recorded in the mind of God.

SERMON IX.

ON DUTY TO PARENTS.

And this is the fifth Commandment. Honour thy father and thy mother, that thy days may be long in the land, which the Lord thy God giveth thee.

It is almost superfluous to observe upon the importance of this law to the welfare and tranquillity of society, as it places the young under the tuition, not only of the old and the experienced, but of those whom affection urges to seize on all the resources which age and experience can suggest for their advantage.

The law orders and the magistrate executes; but the law would be vain and the magistrate powerless, if the parent did not dispose the minds of his children for the reception of that law, and prepare them, by obedience to him, for submission to those whom he himself obeys.

In proportion, therefore, as this great virtue of filial obedience is ingrafted upon the manners of any country, in the same proportion will decency and good order prevail there; and every precept of the Gospel be more deeply engraven in the minds, and uniformly displayed in the actions of that people.

We may observe, that this command of Almighty God is conveyed in a very comprehensive expression,—honour thy father and thy mother;—not simply support, or defend them; but honour them,—a term which comprehends not only the grosser and more obvious duties of preserving them from want and protecting them from violence, but secures to them delicate attentions; studies them with eager and inquisitive affection; screens them with partial judgments; soothes them with profound veneration; repays to them all that fine care,

which has averted the perils of infant life and brought out an human being to the perfection of his reason, and the summit of his strength.

In handling this branch of Christian doctrine, I shall endeavour, first, to show what are the ordinary obstacles to a right performance of this duty; secondly, to point out in what the duty principally consists.

To the repayment of those obligations which we owe to our parents, there is one very considerable, and very singular obstacle; the immensity of those obligations themselves.—We have lived in such a constant state of protection from our parents, in the uniform reception of so much kindness, that their benevolence wants the effect of contrast to produce its just impression upon our minds; the benefits we experience from our neighbours awaken our attention, because they are actions superior to the ordinary tenour of their benevolence; but we do not notice the kindness of a parent, because he has been always kind; we are less sensible to his bounties, because we have never experienced any interruption of them for a single instant; they are like health, and strength, and youth; where custom blunts the edge of enjoyment, and the magnitude of the possession is only discovered by the misery of the loss. It is also a little in the genius of human nature, to think obligations burthensome, and to become careless of remuneration, when they are so great, that it is very difficult to discharge those obligations effectually, and to make that remuneration complete; thus, while smaller instances of friendship are repaid with precision and with pride, the greatest of all benefactors are sometimes treated with ingratitude from the very extent and compass of their goodness.

Another circumstance, which blunts the sense of filial obligation is, that the kindness of parents, one of the most common of all virtues, appears so natural from every human being towards his offspring, that though it would be shocking to want it, it is considered as not meritorious to possess it.—But observe, why this virtue of parental kindness is common, because it is also common to receive a return for it in filial obedience;—nature has laid the foundation; the expectation of reaping the sweets of parental kindness, justified by the feeling of all men, in all ages, has done much more. To deny the obligations which you owe to parents, because it is common in all parents to do good to their children, is to withhold the reward which principally makes that kindness so com-

mon ; and to frustrate as much as in you lies, this great commandment of Almighty God. For, consider to what the kindness of parents would soon be reduced, if it were generally claimed as a matter of right; and how soon, under the influence of compulsion, the most expanded benevolence would contract itself into the narrowest and most inconsiderable limits.

But the affection of parents, it may be urged, is a feeling of nature; therefore they have no merit in obeying it, but is not every act of Christian righteousness founded on some feeling of nature? Is compassion no virtue? Is courage, rightly exercised, no virtue? Is gratitude no virtue? Is the fear of offending no virtue? All these qualities are provided for by nature,—all these qualities men call virtues,—all these qualities Christ taught, practised, and possessed; to deny merit to actions, because we are prompted to them by nature, is to put an end at once to all human virtues, because there is not a single one to which we are not carried by some original principle of our nature. It must be observed, too, that, on every occasion, we are impelled by the constitution of our minds to two opposite systems of action; and that merit and duty consist in selecting the right propensity: Fear prompts us to fly, shame to remain, gratitude to remunerate, avarice to withhold, parental affection to cherish, selfishness to neglect. That man is righteous who, in the conflict of passions, subdues those feelings which God has given us to be subdued; and obeys those feelings which he has given us to be obeyed.

The sense of those obligations we owe to our parents, is frequently impaired by the lapse of time since those obligations have been incurred; the season of infancy is passed away like a dream; the dangerous impetuosity of youth is subsided: we feel strong and wise, and forget the days of weakness, and the nursing father and the nursing mother of the times that are gone;—we remember these things no more; but they live in the memory of the old, and it seemeth hard to them that they should no more be had in remembrance.

These are some of the principal reasons which impede us in this duty of honouring our parents. Let us now see how this duty itself is to be performed.

There are few men, in the present state of society, (softened as the human heart is by the Gospel of Christ,) who, on great and glaring occasions, would be deficient in duty to

their parents; who would suffer them to perish by want; or would refuse to rescue them from aggression. Such sort of occasions very rarely occur; and, therefore, he who comforts himself, that he would, in the cause of his parents, display this species of alacrity, should remember, however excellent his intentions may be, that he will, most probably, pass through life, without ever putting them to the test. There are little sacrifices of daily occurrence, which, in a series of years, contribute as materially to the happiness of a parent, and which, because they are obscure, and have no swelling sentiments to support them, are more difficult for a continuation than more splendid actions. Every man has little infirmities of temper and disposition, which require forgiveness; peculiarities which should be managed; prejudices which should be avoided; innocent habits which should be indulged; fixed opinions which should be treated with respect; particular feelings and delicacies which should be consulted; all this may be done without the slightest violation of truth, or the most trifling infringement of religion; these are the sacrifices which repay a man, in the decline of his life, for all that he has sacrificed in the commencement of yours; this makes a parent delight in his children, and repose on them, when his mind and his body are perishing away, and he is hastening on to the end of all things.—Consider that he has been used to govern you; that (however you may have forgotten it) the remembrance is fresh to him, of that hour, when you stood before him as a child, and he was to you as a God. Bear with him in his old age; pain and sickness have made him what you see; he has been galled by the injustice, perhaps, and stung by the ingratitude of men; let him not see that old age is coming upon him, that his temper is impaired, or that his wisdom is diminished; but as the infirmities of life double upon him, double you your kindness; make him respectable to himself, soothe him, comfort him, honour your father and your mother, that your days may be long, that you may be justified by your own heart, and honoured by the children which God giveth to you.

Parents are honoured by the strict and sacred concealment of any faults they may be discovered to possess. A good son will be loth to suppose that his parents have any faults; —but he must be the worst, and wickedest of men, who unveils their nakedness, and avails himself of those occasions which their protection has given him, to study their weak-

nesses, and to expose them to a merciless world. Neither is it only the duty of a child not to publish the faults of his parents; let him take every fair and judicious opportunity of mentioning their virtues,—their justice,—their kindness,—their forbearance,—their zeal to promote the welfare of their offspring:—in this way a man is honoured by his children; such testimony of children, prudently and modestly delivered, the world always receives with favour and esteem, as they ought to do that rectitude of conduct in the parent which has impressed itself so deeply on the mind of the child.

I need not add to my explanation of what is meant by honouring a parent,—the necessity of obeying him, in all things lawful,—of consulting him in all the important proceedings of our lives,—of referring to his advice and instruction in every difficulty,—of showing that we feel, on all occasions, the strength of that sacred connection which binds us to the authors of our existence.

No man, perhaps, can feel with sufficient energy all those duties which he owes to his parents, before he himself is a parent, and stands in the same relation to other human beings.—It is then he begins to perceive that the fears are real; that all the watchings and all the anxieties are true;—that God has made nothing so timid, so kind, so good, as the heart of a parent;—it is then you will discover why a parent is wounded by the slightest neglect, why he is more sensitive in all his joys and sorrows,—why he rejoices in your faintest glory,—why he mourns over your least disquietude,—why he follows you from the cradle to the grave with an affection which no labour can disgust, no peril intimidate, and which scarcely the blackest ingratitude can ever dissolve. Even the rebellion of Absalom could not extinguish the affection of David; but his victory was turned into mourning; the king forgot that he was safe upon the throne of Israel, and called night and day for his son, weeping in the chamber over the gate, and wishing that God had smitten him with death.

It should be a great incitement to the performance of this duty, that when the time comes for repenting that we have neglected it, when the little personal feuds and jealousies which blind our understanding are at an end, and it becomes plain to the judge, within the breast, that we have often neglected the authors of our being, often given them unneces-

sary pain;—when these feelings rush upon us, it too often happens that all reparation is impossible; they are gone, the grave hides them, and all that remains of father and of mother are the dust and the ashes of their tombs. In all other injuries the chance of repairing them may endure as long as life itself, but it is the ordinary course of nature that the parent should perish before the child; and it is the ordinary course of nature also, that repentance should be most bitter when it is the most ineffectual.

This commandment to honour parents may, in fact, be rendered subservient to every virtue, and may be obeyed as the mean of enforcing every law of the Gospel,—honour your father and your mother; honour them with your lives, by your spotless integrity, by keeping yourselves void of offence towards God and man. If revenge prompts you to break through human laws, and makes you prodigal of life, forgive for the love of your parents;—If indolence and sloth avert you from honourable competition, rouse yourself, that the praises which men bestow upon you, may warm the hearts of your parents;—whenever you are about to do anything that is wrong, remember there are a father and a mother whose hearts you will tear with anguish;—have pity upon them, and bear them in mind in all you do; if you are dishonourable, they cannot be honoured; if you are in wretchedness, they cannot rejoice;—they will burn with your glory; they will blush with your shame;—they have smiled upon your cradle, they will weep on your tomb.

In fine, to fulfil this great duty is an act of religion, as it is one of the commandments of Almighty God. It is a duty most creditable to the heart of him who fulfils it, because it is an obscure duty, and one of long continuance; yet it is base to say, I have forgotten the wants and miseries of my childhood, and, because I am now strong, I will not remember that I was ever weak;—it is cruel to laugh at that wisdom, in its decay, which has guided us in its perfection;—though his tongue falter, and though he is bowed down, he is still thy father;—forsake him not, but comfort him as he has comforted thee; and if thy days are long in the land, at the latest, and the last of those days, thou shalt feel that peace which they only can feel who honour the authors of their being and obey the commandments of their God.

SERMON X.

ON THE GOVERNMENT OF HEART.

His heart is established, he shall not be afraid.—PSALM CXII. VERSE 8.

THE Psalmist, in stating the happiness of a righteous man, comes, at last, to that essential part of it, the government of the heart; and, impressed with the security which such a state of thoughts and feelings must afford, says, his heart is established, he shall not be afraid.

The Psalmist means, I should suppose, by this establishment of heart, an habitual regulation of passions, opinions and imagination;—a suspicious examination, not of our actions, but of the motives of our actions; and such a government of the thoughts as is most likely to conduce to a moral and religious life.

I shall, therefore, endeavour to enforce such valuable doctrine, and to unfold the principles on which it is founded.

The intimate connection between our ideas and our actions, is such, that, as often as the moment comes for doing, or for abstaining, every previous thought which has been harboured in the understanding rushes in, and exercises a share of influence in the decision.—The pleasing pictures of sin we have drawn, in the absence of temptation, dazzle us, in its presence, with a more brilliant colouring, become more vivid, more artful, and more resistless; when the moment arrives for actual gratification, we do not forget the gratification we have enjoyed, by anticipation, when conscience should rise up in all its terrors; we cannot exclude from our minds all the previous sophistry with which it has been disarmed, when the terror of God should alarm us; by this vicious indulgence of our thoughts we have lessened our sense of his vigilance, buoyed up our spirits with the fallacious promise of future repentance, or cast from us, altogether, the

shackles and bondage of religion. It is no wonder that men should so often yield to temptation, when they trust to the casual virtue of the moment, and bring to the contest feelings which have never been subjected to a single instant of discipline and control:—When they abolish every outpost, rase every advanced defence, and trust everything to the strength of the inward fortress alone. Virtue under such a system as this, is not only difficult, it is almost impossible;—it is the result of accident, depending upon circumstances, which he, whom they influence, can neither explain nor command; it is not that virtue which flows from a trained and disciplined heart, the effects of which are uniform; and, as far as we may say so of what belongs to our fallen nature, certain. To make virtue easy, we must lay the foundations of it in thought; when the temptation is not present, it is easy to find reasonings against it;—and, when it is at hand, there are, then, many confirmed opinions and inveterate aversions to guard us from its influence: he who has cautiously excluded from his mind pictures of vicious gratification, and considered a bad life rather with respect to the permanent evil it inflicts than the transient pleasure it affords, will be more likely to see, in real vice, horror than allurement;—he will dwell rather on the rewards than the difficulties of virtue; if he has spurned, even in thought, that worldly good which is purchased by sin, he will, in action, trample it beneath his feet;—if he has enjoyed in fancy the sweet security of an irreproachable life, he will not yield it up to the gold of Ophir; if he has taught himself to shudder at the thought, even of disguised crimes, he will throw open the gates of his soul, and defy the keenest inquisition of the human race; his deeds will be pure as the heavens, lofty as the hills, and clear as the light. On the contrary, most men give the full rein to their thoughts; and, as long as they abstain from the action, liberally indulge in the notion; they never think of stopping till they have inflamed themselves with every possible incentive to advance; or, of abstaining till their appetite is sharpened to the keenest edge; they make a perpetual variance between deeds and desires, aggravate the horror of what must be done, and magnify the importance of what cannot be obtained; and this, not to increase, but to diminish the evils of life; it is done to indemnify ourselves by the luxurious enjoyments of the imagination, for the obstacles opposed to our pleasures, as

if those obstacles which cannot, and which ought not, to be overcome, are not much more intolerable, from their imaginary removal, than they would be from a cheerful acquiescence in the purposes for which they were created; and submission to the wisdom which gave them birth.

There seems to be, in the apprehension of some men, a sort of cruelty, in extending the empire of religion over the thoughts;—it wears the appearance of vexatious inquisition, which disturbs harmless enjoyment, and punishes the appearance of happiness wherever it can be discovered: the fact is so much the reverse, that if the idea of duty is to be admitted at all; if the Gospel of Christ is to establish a bad, and a good, in human actions; it could have suggested no other method so effectual to enforce obedience to its precepts, as the government of the thoughts; because it employs the power of virtue, at a time when opposition to vice is not arduous, or difficult; when temptation is without form, and void; before the dangerous eloquence of the senses has roused the bad passions: instead of creating an additional call upon the energy and labour of man, it fixes upon him a much lighter burthen, and binds him to a much easier yoke; it opposes him not to vivid perceptions, but to faint anticipations; it arrays him not against the real presence, but the ghost and shadow of sin; while it gives to virtue inward peace and outward respect: softening its privations, diminishing its suffering; and forgetting its toils.—Such are the results of that discipline which we deem oppressive tyranny over the thoughts; such are the salutary pictures which our natural love of virtue, sheltered from actual temptation, will soon enable us to draw.

Neither can this discipline of the thoughts be regarded with any colour of justice, as trivial, or inadequate to the efforts which has produced it; for I am not contending, that it is an *useful* discipline; but that it is an *indispensable* discipline; not that it is an *auxiliary* to the highest virtues; but a *necessary* foundation for the *lowest and the least:* it is not possible that that man should walk outwardly in the law of God, who is for ever feeding in imagination upon the pleasures of sin.—The passions will at last act; the seed will break through the incumbent obstacle; the vice, which has been so often pictured, (because to draw such pictures is considered as compatible with innocence,) will be imitated to the life with fatal and unerring precision.

Having thus touched upon the necessity of governing the heart, and handled a few superficial prejudices, which may render us less willing to submit to this invaluable discipline, I shall endeavour, with God's help, to lay down a few rules for its more easy attainment.

There is an old apophthegm, which says, *reverence thyself*, and in this saying, much sound wisdom is locked up. If we had half the reverence for ourselves that we have for the world, how upright and how pure would our conduct be; we should carry about with us an inward judge, whose vigilance we should fear; whose justice we should respect; and whose praise we should love; an awful judge; the man within the breast; whose tribunal would extend over the motives of actions, who would approve virtue, while it yet only glowed in the thoughts, and discover crime in the secret workings of the soul;—this principle of self-love would effectually banish from our minds every vicious indulgence of thought; and every low, ignominious feeling; we should no longer wear virtue as a mask, but all that we do now from conformity, and the fear of shame, we should do then from rooted principle, and passionate love of God.

Secondly, the heart is established by prayer because prayer recalls to us the mercy of God for our love, his justice for our terror, and his perfections for our imitation; it reminds us of the frailty of man, and makes us rationally suspicious of ourselves;—it brings before us the crucified Saviour of mankind, and in his image, personifies every virtue;—it turns our thoughts from men to angels; from frailty to perfection; from a few evil days to an happy eternity; from a jumble of sighs and joys, to a gladness that endureth for ever.

Again the heart is governed, by impressing on our recollection the intimate connection between thought and action; and by making the propriety of the one the test of propriety in the other; if it is wrong to gratify revenge, it is wrong to dwell on it in imagination; if it is our duty to forgive outwardly, it is our duty to forgive from our inward hearts; if we are to withstand the allurements of pleasure, we must not contemplate them;—if we are to support painful duties, we must not magnify them in our thoughts;—whatever we are forbidden to do, we are forbidden to think; whatever we are commanded to perform, we are commanded to love: there must be no discordance between the inward and the outward

man; thought, word and deed must be constantly and closely united together; there are, indeed, a purity in this doctrine, and a wisdom, which give to the Gospel one cause of its superiority over the spurious religions which are so widely diffused over the world, that, whereas they look wholly to the mere overt act, like an human law, Christianity commences its empire from the first dawn of thought; and, by influencing the causes of actions, makes virtue more easy and more permanent.

The heart is governed by tracing up our pains and pleasures to their source; whenever we enjoy any pleasure unalloyed by dissatisfaction, it will be found, almost always, to proceed from the performance of duty, as our miseries will from the neglect of it; and the repetition of this exercise will insensibly impress upon our minds, the inseparable connection between virtue and happiness: there is nothing, for instance, so likely to cure us of selfishness, as the gloom and uneasiness with which it never fails to be attended, or so likely to reconcile us to the immediate efforts of the social virtues, as the cheerfulness and interest in common life which they always communicate to their possessor: when we have traced up lassitude and remorse to the waste of time, we shall employ it with more economy and vigour: when we have discovered that we pay in languor of body and loss of reputation for the pleasures of excess, we shall be gradually reconciled to moderation; when we have found out in the heart, the springs of joy and pain, we shall learn to keep them aright.

A steady employment of time, and a vigorous exercise of the intellectual faculties, are no mean auxiliaries to the government of the heart; for our minds, made to overcome difficulties, either lose their powers entirely when they are without an object, or turn those powers inwardly to consume themselves: It is clear, that we have no power to summon up particular ideas at pleasure; and it is equally clear, if we cannot summon them up, their occurrence is involuntary, and free from guilt; but when ideas are present, it is in our power to decide whether we will dwell upon and expand them; whether we will summon up every notion to which they happen to be related, or whether we will oppose the power of Satan, and resist the peril of unhallowed images: hence, the use of intellectual exertion and previous habits of labour in the government of the heart, that we are no longer

at the mercy of every dangerous fancy, and every wanton image penciled by the passions; we can fix our eyes steadily upon intellectual objects, and find in the cultivation of our understandings the noblest security for the innocence of our lives. The greater part of our wretchedness, real and chimerical, of our vices, and of the mistaken views we are so unfortunately apt to take of human life, proceed from the want of something to do; think we must, and if not of that which is ornamental, or useful, certainly, of that which is pernicious; and let it never be forgotten, that as often as we give ourselves up to the dominion of vicious thoughts, there is never wanting an abundance of ingenious words, which consult the delicacy of a bashful sinner, and veil the deformity of vice. A weariness of the decent restrictions imposed by society, is warmth of heart and liberality of sentiment; whatever is licentious is romantic; whatever is base, is prudent; extravagance is generosity; contempt of public virtue, practical good sense; and ignorant skepticism, enlightened superiority to prejudice.

The important practice I am endeavouring to inculcate, will be powerfully promoted, by cherishing a love of openness and a detestation of hypocrisy; by living as it were in public; by scorning to maintain one character before the world, and another in the secret places of the heart;—if this slavery of the mind, this necessity of fearing and hiding ourselves from our fellow-creatures, were painted in glowing colours to the free and noble feelings of youth, it would have no small tendency to encourage purity of thought; and would convert the proud defiance, natural to that time of life, to the wisest of all purposes.—To feel for the judgment of the world unfeigned respect, is the property of a wise man; but to know that any human being may, eventually, have it in his power to treat us with merited contempt and infamy, and that we owe our reputation only to the ignorance of those with whom we are in repute, is a feeling which can never exist long in the mind of him who has listened to the advice of my text, and laboured earnestly that his heart should be established aright.

There is, above all, for the obtaining of this habit, an awful sense of the ever-during presence of God, and a dread of laying open, to his pure spirit, a carnal and voluptuous soul:—The same God, who dwelleth above, hath his ways upon earth; he numbers the sanctities of Heaven, and knoweth

the thoughts of man; he searches where the planets wander; and walketh in the paths of the mind. Remember, also, the pure severity of the Gospel, which punishes the adultery of the heart; which resents the malice of the thoughts; and ordains that words of pardon and of peace should come from the very springs of the heart. If we can refrain from real vice, we will not lose the reward of our firmness by the poor enjoyments of imaginary gratification; if we have overcome the greater difficulty, we will not yield to the less; if the terrors of an hereafter have made our lives pure, we will not perish because our thoughts are evil.

I have thus endeavoured to impress upon you the importance of establishing the heart, as it renders righteousness more secure, and more easy; those who have ever practised this truly Christian discipline, can need no other incentive to its continuation than the immediate pleasure they have derived from it; and that feeling of inviolable security which must ever be the lot of those in whom outward and visible virtue is the accurate sign of inward and spiritual purity. If, by a vigorous exertion of our own powers, and by earnest prayer to God, we can guard from pollution this fountain of evil and of good, we have little to fear from all which the world can inflict; and at the moment when this mortal body is crumbling into dust, the heart, established in upright thoughts, shall animate the dying Christian, and strengthen his faith in the mercies of his God.

SERMON XI.

ON GOOD FRIDAY.

And Jesus, crying with a loud voice, gave up the ghost.—St. Matthew xv. verse 37.

The last scenes of our Saviour's life, and the particular circumstances of his death, are fit subjects for examination, either as they afford an additional example of the truth of the Christian religion, or a practical example of morality. Whether we would learn how persecution is to be endured, and death and adversity supported; or would try, by the events of so critical a period, the authenticity of our Saviour's mission, this part of the Gospel history ought powerfully to arrest and deeply to engage our attention.

To try the character of the founder of our religion by the last scenes of his life, is to subject it to the most candid of all tests; for if there had been fanaticism, it is probable, and conformable to experience, that the approach of death would have lowered that fanaticism to abject fear, or exalted it to high passion; if there had been imposture, it is probable that the love of life and hope of impunity would have produced either a full confession of the artifice, or those signs of fluctuation and doubt which a bad man is so apt to display when his life depends upon the success of his falsehood. If, on the contrary, the last scenes of that life display mildness, simplicity, firmness and majesty; if they harmonize with every other period of his existence, they sanction our belief in the divinity of Christ, and they deserve our imitation, our wonder and our love.

There is, in the death of Christ, as there was in his life, perfect simplicity; no scenical effect, no expression of tumul-

tuous feeling, no swelling words and sentiments; no desire to excite compassion in those who witnessed his sufferings. The life of our Saviour is great, because it has no scenes of vulgar glory; because he endured much for an high object; and loved truth and virtue so well that when their interests were concerned, he felt no pain and feared no evil;—and his death is great, because he died simply, lifted up by a great purpose above fortune and the world. The death-bed of men who have acted a conspicuous part in the world, is sometimes a scene of vanity, rather than a scene of piety; they have lived, not for God and for duty, but for opinion; and they summon up the remnants of strength to astonish the beholders, and to give the last brilliant colour to their glory; but Jesus Christ died with a few words, and, to appearance, forgetful of himself; remembering only what he had done for others:—*for this cause came I into the world, to bear witness of the truth.*

The conduct of our Saviour towards Peter, whose apostasy he had foretold, is characteristic of majestic simplicity,—when Peter had denied him thrice, the Lord turned and looked upon Peter, and Peter went out and wept bitterly. If that look taught Peter to repent, it may teach us to believe: the fraud and the folly which we witness, have no such singleness of heart and such plain majesty of action; whenever we behold such signs as these, we hail them as the shepherds did the star in the East; they are the marks which God has put upon truth and good faith; premeditated sophistry may destroy the first burst of nature, but in reading the history of Christ's death, the fresh and sudden feelings of the heart, all acquit him, all praise him, all believe in him;—we all feel as Pontius Pilate, his judge, felt, who, when he had looked at him, and heard him speak, broke from the judgment seat, and bathed his trembling hands in the water, saying, "I call you all to witness, I am guiltless of the blood of this innocent man."

In the trial and death of Christ there was no symptom of fear; he encountered all his miseries with decent, yet unyielding courage; nor did he evince the smallest disposition to recede from those high pretensions which he had advanced, or disown that awful character which he had supported. When the multitude came out to seize Jesus of Nazareth, he said, "I am he!" When the high priest asked him of his disciples and his doctrines, "Why askest thou me? (is his

reply.) I spake openly to the world; I have ever taught in the synagogue, and the temple where the Jews resort, and in secret have I said nothing; why askest thou me? Ask them which heard me what I said unto them; behold they know what I said." Then comes that memorable answer, which was the immediate cause of his condemnation. "I adjure thee (says the high priest) tell me if thou art the Christ, the son of the blessed?" And Jesus answered, "thou hast said it. I am the Son of God; hereafter thou shalt see me sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of Heaven." Thus far, then, there are identity and consistency in the character of our Saviour; deserted and disowned by his followers; buffeted, smitten, and mocked, by an angry multitude; judged by enemies; at the eve of death he said all that he had said before, when the multitude strewed branches in his road, and cried, "Hosanna to the highest." The Gospel has all that corroboration which it can possibly receive from uniformity of character in its founder, —a character, after the intense light thrown upon it, by adversity and prosperity found to be without blemish or spot. Such evidence, though not of itself conclusive, assists the stronger proofs of the Gospel, and spreads upon its minutest parts the genuine colour of truth. And this is the peculiar importance of that species of death which our Saviour died, that it leaves nothing to conjecture; that it develops fully his sacred character; and displays him in every variety of difficult situation. Without the test of a persecuting death, something would have been wanting to the proof; for death must surely be considered as the strongest of all proofs, and the most certain of all tests;—he who dies for calling himself the Son of God, must, at least, believe himself to be so; it is impossible to add anything to this evidence of internal conviction; and, had it been wanting to the history of Christianity, the whole argument, on which the sacred cause depends, would have been much less complete than it now is; but that which St. Paul tells us was to the Jews folly, and to the Greeks a stumbling block, is, to us, the strongest and most irresistible lesson of the true glory and greatness of the founder of our religion.

We must observe, in speaking of our Saviour's firmness, that it was the firmness of reason, not of passion; there was nothing in it which could in the remotest degree evince an heated and disordered imagination; nothing was ever so

far removed from enthusiasm; he was mute under the crown and the robe, and reviled not again when he was reviled; he bore every species of indignity with calm resignation, and died meekly and mutely as a victim. Those upon whom such facts make no impression, must believe, that an human being of the calmest passions and the simplest mind, imagined himself to be the Son of God; that, in consequence of this madness, he preached the purest virtue and the soundest reason; that he lived in wretchedness for that doctrine and that character; then died for them, in the flower of his age, not only without the smallest symptom of fear, or of enthusiasm, but with the cool display of every great quality; I will not say such a fact is impossible, but I may say it is contrary to all human experience. Imposture and enthusiasm have never come down in such a shape to us; such opinions may suit those who believe greater improbabilities than they refute; but no sound judge of the human mind will adopt them, and no fair reasoner advance them.

Another proof of the excellence of our Saviour's death and of its consistency with his former history, is the tender and forgiving disposition which it uniformly evinces. His first prayer to Heaven is, that his murderers may be forgiven:—"Father, forgive them, they know not what they do." While he is on the cross, and in the agonies of a painful death, he sees his mother and his favourite disciple,—"When Jesus, therefore, saw his mother, and the disciple whom he loved, he said unto his mother, woman, behold thy son! And to the disciple, behold thy mother! And from that hour the disciple took her unto his own home." Thus it was that this great character preserved, to the last, that mild virtue and those good feelings which his precepts taught, and all his previous actions confirmed; the spirit of heavenly charity triumphed over the grave; the disciple whom he loved, and the mother who bare him, were dear to him even upon the cross; and, while they are weeping at his feet, his last accents lighten their misery, and bind them for ever in that lasting friendship which flows from a common grief. Let us remember, in thinking of his dying charity, that he has commended to us not only son, and mother, and father, but all the children of the Gospel to all time; that he requires of us to perform acts of charity and kindness; to offer up those passions which are destructive of human happiness; and to learn from his death to be purer, and kinder, and better men.

Having thus performed the last offices which remained to be discharged, the world and its cares are no more to him; his earthly career is finished; he bowed his head, and, crying with a loud voice, gave up the ghost. Thus died that great being whose life was one uniform tenour of just doctrines and compassionate actions; who laboured to soften, to unite and to purify mankind; in whose existence there is not a word, nor a deed, which had not our happiness for its object and its end. Truly, there is something in Christ's history which paints him to our eyes as the most venerable, the most simple and the most holy of beings. The keenest malice, and the sharpest inquisition, cannot fix upon him the shadow of error, or of crime; he preached doctrines for which he led a life of persecution: and died a death of pain. Did he not, then, believe in these doctrines himself? But he was an enthusiast! Never, then, was enthusiasm so mild, so gentle, so moderate, and so intelligible;—do you unto others as you would they should do unto you; let all your words be yea, and nay;—pray to God, not before men, but in secret; give alms of all thou hast to the poor; purify the inward heart; and expect reward of God, as you are good to your fellow-creatures. If this is enthusiasm, what then is simple, what clear, what practical, and what wise? Unquestionably, no one who has ever attempted to legislate for mankind has involved his doctrine less in florid description and ambiguous sublimity; has calculated his precepts so directly for practice, or addressed himself so uniformly to the common feelings and common sense of his followers.—Nor did our Saviour seek, by the arts of insinuation, to lead before him a deluded multitude; he ministered to no man's passion; and he flattered no man's pride; he taught not like the Scribes and Pharisees, but as one having authority;—his resistance to the ruling powers was as far removed from intemperate violence as his demeanour to the people was from seductive artifice:—to be brief, there is not in the character of Christ one trait of mortality; nothing which, for an instant, bespeaks him allied to the infirmities of man; no change, no guile, no conflict of passion, no wavering of heart, no pride of spirit; without thought for himself, without love of command, a man of sorrow, rejected and despised; who bore in his bosom the rebukes of many people and moved silently on in the paths of affliction; healing and comforting mankind; and laying the foundations of that blessed religion the voice of which has gone out into all lands and called man

from the alternate slumber and fury of his savage life to the sweets and glories of industry and peace.

So lived Jesus, the Son of God; and how he was loved, and honoured in his death, we all know: Every passer by smote his breast; the daughters of Jerusalem followed him weeping; Judas flung down the thirty pieces of silver; Pilate said, I am guiltless of his blood; the thief saw he was a God; the centurion believed and trembled; the veil of the temple was rent; darkness was over the earth; the graves were open; and many sleeping bodies of the saints came up to the world:—these are the miracles which carried conviction to the hearts of his persecutors and murderers: if we can study in vain the morals of his life, we must yield, at least, to the miracles of his death: and exclaim, with the trembling centurion, "of a truth this was the Son of God."

SERMON XII.

ON THE JUDGMENTS WE FORM OF OTHERS.

In righteousness shalt thou judge thy neighbour.—Leviticus xix. verse 15.

Though this sentiment has been repeatedly confirmed by our Saviour himself; and though it continually pervades the writings of Saint Paul and the apostles; I have chosen to quote it from the Jewish Scriptures, to show, that it was an ancient law among men, arising from good feeling, sanctioned by long practice, and, therefore, from its direct bearing upon human happiness, incorporated into Christian morals.

In righteousness shalt thou judge thy neighbour; the first branch of which righteous judgment is, to cultivate a predisposition to mercy; to hear bad motives imputed to others, with an earnest desire that they may prove to be exaggerated, or untrue; and to discipline the mind in such a manner, that its habitual feeling, on hearing of the faults of others, should be that of unfeigned sorrow. Modern manners have adopted a certain language of virtuous sympathy, which passes, not unfrequently, with ourselves and others, for the excellence itself;—if all, then, who wish to appear good, counterfeit a compassion for the faults of others, all who wish to *be* good, should really cherish and promote the feeling.—Manners are the shadows of virtues; the momentary display of those qualities which our fellow-creatures love and respect.—If we strive to become, then, what we strive to appear, manners may often be rendered useful guides to the performance of our duties.

The habit we have of comparing ourselves with others, is that principle of our nature which prevents us from feeling as much compassion as we ought for the infirmities of the

rest of mankind; we cannot hear a bad action imputed to any one without congratulating ourselves that we have not been guilty of it, and enjoying a momentary superiority that our fortune has been more perfect, our wisdom more penetrating, and our virtue more firm:—this is not what Christianity teaches; it teaches us to listen, with trembling humility, to every example of error, or of crime; to reflect, at such seasons, upon the frail nature of man; to receive, with serious pity, every fresh example of misguided reason and triumphant passion; to remember, that to-morrow may bring some difficulty which we cannot vanquish; some temptation which we cannot resist;—and that we ourselves may then be suing for that indulgence which to-day we so arrogantly refuse to others.

To judge our neighbour in righteousness, it is our duty to consider those motives which may corrupt our judgment: when we set ourselves to reflect how far we have cultivated this species of justice, we deceive ourselves, by quoting the examples of those who have become dear to us from particular circumstances; by citing the judgments we have made of friends, of kindred, of men, who have embarked with us in common designs; have been engaged in the same pursuit; and been actuated by the same principles: doubtless we are just enough in all these instances; here we feel real sorrow at the faults of others, and do all, and even more than the most righteous judges ought to do: but if we really and faithfully wish to fulfil this great duty, we are to examine how far we have righteously judged those to whom we have never been connected in friendship; those whom chance has separated from us by rank and wealth; nature by talents; education by opinions; those who have been opposed to us in questions which try the passions: those from whom we have suffered disrespect, injury and contempt. If, in the awful moments of self-judgment, we can satisfy ourselves that we never wished that calumny to be true which accorded with our warmest passions; that we have never been disappointed by that innocence which baffled our resentment, that the infirmities of our nature have rarely stifled this tenderness for the good fame of others; then, and not till then, are we entitled to conceive that we have obeyed this precept of the Scriptures, and judged our fellow-creatures in righteousness.

It is from inattention to the motives which may corrupt our judgments, that the art of differing in opinion upon important

subjects is so little understood, or, if understood, is so imperfectly exercised;—a part of conduct, however, in which all the best feelings of a Christian may be called into action, and upon the proper exercise of which the happiness of society intimately depends. To look upon mankind, collected either into greater or lesser numbers, as members either of kingdoms, or cities, we are delighted with that social combination, that unity of view and interests, which appears among them; it is only from a more intimate view of their condition that we perceive those interior societies separated from each other by insuperable aversion, and waging the most furious and implacable war of opinion;—to see men of acknowledged worth and talents totally blind to each other's perfections, furiously ascribing to each other the most improbable depravity, and shunning each other with the most marked detestation, is, to him who has kept his passions cool and unbiased, a lesson upon the infirmities of our nature not easily to be forgotten: differ we must, and upon the most serious topics; but the law of Christ is not a set of words always in our mouths, but a rule to be never absent from our hearts. What is the meaning of being a Christian, if it is not to carry into all these differences a candid, liberal and forgiving spirit? to exhibit towards every opponent the purest and most impartial justice? to debar ourselves of the unworthy resource of imputing bad motives, but upon the most unquestionable evidence? to exercise our own right of deciding, without denying that right of others? and, while we obey the result of our own deliberations, to remember it is not impossible that we may have mistaken, exceeded, or distorted the truth?

To judge our neighbour righteously, we should remember that, in many instances, a fault once committed may be atoned for; and, that an imputation once true is not always true: we do not derive that useful lesson which we might derive from the consciousness of our own infirmities. If there are very few, even of the best and most approved among us, who would dare to lay open the secret history of thought, word and deed, from infancy to this hour; if many are conscious of secret sin, many of those numerous perils on which their virtue has been nearly wrecked; if they are sensible, as they must be, how often they have been indebted to accident, rather than wisdom for escape; how powerfully do all these considerations inculcate upon our minds precepts of tenderness and mercy for the infirmities of our nature? not that

crimes should be sheltered from evil report; but that, when they are not of too deep a dye, they should be forgotten. The faults of youth ought not to follow the same being through every stage of his existence;—there is no cruelty so great as to keep the fallen man for ever in the dust; and to blast his reviving hopes with the malicious memory of past misconduct; but the misfortune is, we want the vices of others to keep up our own halting virtue; and we cannot afford to lose them; a good man is ever looking inward to the bright image he has formed of Christian purity, while it is the genuine habit of baseness to found reputation upon the imperfections of others, and of suspected virtue, ferociously to insult its own vices, in the lives and conduct of the rest of the world.

Whatever be our opinion of the guilt of others, it is not always necessary to propagate and diffuse it;—in the administration of public justice, punishment is separated from accusation: but at the tribunal of the world they are often the same things. If men were as ready to investigate calumny as they are to receive it, the evils of its diffusion would be much less; but the disease travels faster than the remedy can follow; to give credit to defamation, though neither the generous nor the just is considered as the safe side, and many receive the accusation, who are too careless to listen to the defence, or too timid to admit it.

To promote the righteous judgment of our neighbour, it is our duty to defend him where we can do so with any colour of justice;—this we are frequently prevented from doing, because it is unpopular; it checks a source of amusement from which we are all apt, at times, to derive but too much pleasure; it recalls those who hear us from a state of mirth, and compels them to listen to the dry, unamusing suggestions of justice. But this temporary displeasure it is our duty to incur, from the most exalted motives of Christian duty:—to consider the real degree of credibility due to evil report; the temptations to misrepresentation; and the chances for mistake;—to take the fact with all its favourable colours and extenuating circumstances; to wait for the answer of the accused party; to insist upon all the good which we have previously known of him; all this is in the power of the most inconsiderable being among us; and if there can be a proof of a truly good, a truly noble, and a truly Christian disposition, this it is. While others listen eagerly to the narrrative of folly and of crime, and every one secretly exults and says,

thank God, I am not as this man is;—forget not thou thy absent brother, and, in the midst of his enemies, let thy voice be heard for the defenceless man;—look not for short-lived favour, and the praise of a moment, by trampling on him who is already fallen; but cherish a fixed concern for human happiness: let your words and actions show that in your eyes the absent are sacred; and check, with serious benevolence, that mirth which is cruel and unjust.—This it is to look down upon the world from an eminence, to live upon the grand, to act upon a noble and commanding scale, and to lay deep the foundations of inward approbation and public regard.

There are many, I believe, who are so far from listening to the means by which this satisfaction at the misconduct of others may be checked, that they are rather inclined to doubt of the disorder than to adopt the remedy. It wounds our pride as much to confess the fault, as it gratifies our pride to practise it. No man chooses to avow that he wants the faults of others as a foil to his own character; no man has the desperate candour to confess, that the comparison which he draws between himself and his brother upon hearing of any act of misconduct, is a source of pleasure; and that, in such cases, the feelings of self overcome the rules of the Gospel; if you ask any man such a question, he will say, that he depends upon his own efforts, and not on the failure of others; he will contend that the errors of his fellow-creatures are to him a source of serious concern; he says so—and he believes that he says the truth; for no man knows the secrets of his own heart; but if it is true, why are the wings of evil fame so swift and so unwearied? Why is it not as difficult to lose, as to gain, the commendations of mankind? Why does it require a whole life to gain a character which can be lost, and unjustly lost, in a single moment of time? It is because we are reluctant to exalt, and ever willing to pull down; because we love the fault better which gives us an inferior, than the virtue which elevates an human being above us.

I say these things not to offend, but to promote Christian charity; not to lower our ideas of human nature, but to recall it to the purity and perfection of the Gospel; and by these means to adorn it, and to lift it up. The true way to rid ourselves of these unworthy feelings, is to cultivate a general love of happiness and of excellence; to rejoice with the joy

of others; to be glad that the heart of any human being is made glad; to be proud of every virtue built up with time and toil and sound instruction; to mourn when man forgets his God; and to feel that it is the common interest of our nature to withstand the violence of passion; and to extend the dominion of true religion.

I have thus endeavoured to show in what righteous judgment of our neighbour consists; I have stated it to be our duty to receive, with reluctance, the imputation of evil, to guard against every impulse of prejudice or passion, which may bias our judgment; to defend our fellow-creatures, where we can do so with justice; and never to believe in evil report but upon the most satisfactory evidence: I have stated, that it is also our duty to suppose, that, in time, bad qualities may be corrected, and serious faults atoned for; to receive, with pleasure, every symptom of amendment; and lastly, whatever be the proof of guilt, to be slow and cautious in bringing it forward to the knowledge of mankind.

Such is the manner in which I have attempted to explain this Christian duty of judging our neighbour in righteousness;—allow me to conclude, by pressing earnestly upon your attention this ancient and sublime law, which bears so directly upon human happiness, and is so frequently and powerfully sanctioned by the Gospel. To depreciate our fellow-creatures may gratify pride by the comparative elevation of ourselves; or minister to vanity by the display of lively talents; but the pleasure is soon gone, and the bitterness remains;—we feel that the purity of our own conduct gives us no title to censure that of others; we are conscious of deserving the enmity of those who have been the objects of our malice; and we know that it is not approved even by those who appear to derive from it the greatest amusement; but to conquer the love of transient applause, to condemn reluctantly, and for the public good; to defend and protect with pleasure; and though passion, pride and impunity tempt, to preserve a scrupulous and awful justice in our judgment of others, is to secure the purest and most perfect of all pleasures,—self-approbation and respect. If you can raise your mind to this elevation of virtue, mankind will love and adore you; every human being will feel his honour and his good fame safe in your hands;—and that Saviour will heap blessings on your head, who has bid you judge in mercy, and love your neighbour as yourself.

SERMON XIII.

ON THE LOVE OF OUR COUNTRY.

By the waters of Babylon, we sat down and wept, when we remembered thee, Oh Sion!—PSALM CXXXVII. VERSE 1.

THIS beautiful Psalm was written in commemoration of the Babylonish captivity, written, if we may judge, from the lively feelings it exhibits, soon after the period of that memorable event; and, in truth, it is not possible to read it without emotion. It tells a tale of sorrow with that simple melancholy which the heart can only feel, and the imagination never counterfeit. They hung up their harps on the willow trees, they could not sing the songs of their God, for they were in captivity, and heaviness of spirit oppressed them; they thought of their country, and sat down by the waters of Babylon to weep.

Whence, it may be asked, does this love of our country, this universal passion, proceed? Why does the eye ever dwell with fondness upon the scenes of infant life? Why do we breathe with greater joy the breath of our youth? Why are not other soils as grateful, and other heavens as gay? Why does the soul of man ever cling to that earth where it first knew pleasure and pain, and, under the rough discipline of the passions, was roused to the dignity of moral life? Is it only that our country contains our kindred and our friends? And is it nothing but a name for our social affections? It cannot be this; the most friendless of human beings has a country which he admires and extols, and which he would, in the same circumstances, prefer to all others under heaven. Tempt him with the fairest face of nature, place him by living waters, under shadowy cedars of Lebanon; open to his view all the gorgeous allurements of the climates of the sun;

he will love the rocks and deserts of his childhood better than all these, and thou canst not bribe his soul to forget the land of his nativity; he will sit down and weep by the waters of Babylon, when he remembers thee, Oh Sion.

But whether from this love of our kindred, or from habit, or from association, or from whatever more simple principle of our nature this love of our country proceeds, it is of the highest importance to society that its existence should be cherished, and its energy directed aright; if the duties which regulate the conduct of man to man be fit subjects for discussion in this place, that virtue which is founded upon the relation between societies and individuals, and includes the important and extended interests of a whole people, must, in preference to all others, merit discussion on my part, and attention on yours.

An attempt is often made to distinguish between moral and Christian subjects of investigation; but no subject can be moral which is not Christian. Christianity guides us to another world, by showing us how to act in this; in precepts more, or less general, it enacts and limits every human duty; the world is the theatre where we are to show whether we are Christians in profession, or in deed; and there is no action of our lives which concerns the interests of others, in which we do not either violate or obey a Christian law; I cannot, therefore, illustrate a moral duty, without, at the same time, enforcing a precept of our religion.

The love of our country has, in the late scenes acted in the world, been so often made a pretext for bad ambition, and so often given birth to crude and ignorant violence, that many good men entertain no very great relish for the virtue, and some are, in truth, tired and disgusted with the very name of it; but this mode of thinking, though very natural and very common, is, above all others, that which goes to perpetuate error in the world; if good men are to cherish in secret the idea, that any theory of duties to our country is romantic and absurd, because bad men and foolish men have made it an engine of crime, or found it a source of error; if there is to be this constant action and reaction between extreme opinions; the sentiments of mankind in eternal vibration between one error and another, can never rest upon the middle point of truth. Let it be our pride to derive our principles, not from times and circumstances, but from reason and religion, and to struggle against that mixture of indolence

and virtue which condemns the use, because it will not discriminate the abuse, which it abhors. In spite of the prostitution of this venerable name, there is, and there ever will be, a Christian patriotism, a great system of duties which man owes to the sum of human beings with whom he lives: to deny it is folly; to neglect it is crime.

The love of our country has been ridiculed by some modern enthusiasts, as too narrow a field for the benevolence of an enlightened mind; they are for comprehending the whole human race in our affections, and deem any partiality shown to the particular country in which we happen to be born, as a narrow and unphilosophical preference. Now it would be difficult to say, whether complete selfishness, or universal philanthropy, is the most likely to mislead us from that sound practical goodness, in which the beauty of Christianity and the merit of a Christian consist. Our sphere of thoughts has hardly any limits, our sphere of action hardly any extent; we may speculate on worlds, we must act in families, in districts, and in kingdoms; and if we contract a distaste for the good we can do, because it is not equal to the good we can conceive, we only sacrifice deeds to words, and rule our lives by maxims of the most idle and ostentatious sentiment.

One of the first passions by which the imagination of an able and a good youth is inflamed, is the love of his country; but he often manages it in such a manner as to convert it into a venial error rather than a virtue; I say venial, because those errors which proceed from the good and generous dispositions of youth, deserve indulgence, and are seldom perpetuated but when they are treated with harshness. All the splendid actions performed in popular governments, give a very early bias to the mind; the perusal of them forms the most material part of education; there is nothing which ranges youthful fancy on the side of government, and everything which ranges it against it; there is very little to feed the imagination in the idea that men must be restrained, and protected (above all things) from their own madness and folly; that they must often be deluded and threatened into their own good; but a very little warmth and elevation of thought will convert all the necessary operations of the best governments into crimes;—contribution is extortion, punishment is cruelty, management and prudence are duplicity, and restraint slavish subjugation; and hence, in the young, patriotism is often little else than an universal sus-

picion and abuse of all government whatsoever. Many have the good fortune to outgrow this childish propensity; in others it is fixed for life, and exhibits instances of mistaken, declamatory men, and of the most deplorable waste of talents.

Another cause which renders the love of their country less useful in the young, is vanity.

A young man in some of the higher professions, becomes fluent in technical phrases, and skilful in technical business; he acquires some degree of consideration in the little circle in which he lives, and tastes, for the first time, the sweets of distinction and praise: instantly he becomes to himself a creature of unlimited importance, a concealed treasure; and careless of that partial pre-eminence, which he considers so much less than his real right, he paints to himself listening senates, and applauding people; and is an orator, a demagogue, and a statesman.

In the first half of life, vanity in all its various shapes is unquestionably the great moving passion; and it is, perhaps, in the first half of life that these ideas more peculiarly prevail. As a man multiplies his relations, and takes a firmer root in society, as he assumes the new characters of father and husband, and as the real business of the world crowds upon him, he becomes more practical; the follies, like the beauties of his youth, fade away, and the soul's dark mansion lets in new light through the openings which time has made.

It would seem, also, that the science of government is an unappropriated region in the universe of knowledge. Those sciences with which the passions can never interfere, are considered to be attainable only by study and by reflection; while there are not many young men who doubt of their ability to make a constitution, or to govern a kingdom. At the same time, there cannot, perhaps, be a more decided proof of a superficial understanding, than the depreciation of those difficulties which are inseparable from the science of government. To know well the local and the natural man; to track the silent march of human affairs; to seize with happy intuition on those great laws which regulate the prosperity of empires; to reconcile principles to circumstances, and be no wiser than the times will permit; to anticipate the effects of every speculation upon the entangled relations and awkward complexity of real life; and to follow out the theorems of the senate to the daily comforts of the cottage; is a task which

they will fear most who know it best; a task in which the great and the good have often failed, and which it is not only wise, but pious, and just in common men to avoid.

There is a malignity of disposition which is unfavourable to the interests of the country in which we live, a weariness of the general content, a disgust at the diffusion of happiness, and a desire to forget internal vexation by the sight of a contagious and epidemic misery. In a different temperament, this predisposing cause is a love of turbulence, an impatience of everything tranquil, and a horror of stagnant serenity and insipid content. Above all, there is that horrid passion of convulsing, and reversing which would place the heel of the rustic upon the neck of the noble,—would worship the pandects and decretals of peasants,—and thrust the sacred gold of the sceptre into hands that had ever clenched the scythe and the spade.

There lies at the bottom of all vast communities, a numerous sect of men, of open or disguised poverty, who have lost fortune and fame, in the sink of pleasure, and quenched every particle of God in voluptuous enormities, and crimes; base, bad men, who prey upon industry and hate virtue; who would tear down the decencies, and pollute the innocence of life, that they might make mankind as wretched as themselves, and spread the horror of ungoverned passions and unqualified indulgence. Here is the first nucleus of all revolutions; it matters not whether the object be to enslave the people, or to free them; to give them up to another's tyranny, or to the more cruel dominion of their own folly; to establish a despotism or a democracy. In all revolutions there is plunder, and change; and here are the hordes of assassins and robbers, the tools of political violence, tutored by their ancient pleasures and their present distress, to callous inhumanity and boundless rapine. This source of danger to our country needs but very little comment; the cure of such an evil falls under that general law of self-defence by which we crush a venomous reptile, or slaughter a beast of prey. No other argument can here be of the smallest importance but the argument of brute force and determined opposition.

Many people who are conscious, and justly conscious of merit, are less disposed to the love of their country from finding themselves neglected by their superiors in rank and reputation; every man is desirous of rising in life, and ambitious of connecting himself in the most eligible manner. The

world unfortunately measures by one scale, and the individual by another; and disappointment is always attributed to the injustice of those who confer reputation, rather than the overrated pretensions of him who seeks it.

It is natural to every man to wish for distinction; and the praise of those who can confer honour by their praise, in spite of all false philosophy, is sweet to every human heart. But as eminence can but be the lot of a few, patience of obscurity is a duty which we owe not more to our own happiness than to the quiet of the world at large. Give a loose, if you are young and ambitious, to that spirit which throbs within you; measure yourself with your equals; and learn, from frequent competition, the place which nature has allotted to you; make of it no mean battle, but strive hard; strengthen your soul to the search of truth, and follow that spectre of excellence which beckons you on beyond the walls of the world to something better than man has yet done. It may be, you shall burst out into light and glory at the last: but if frequent failure convince you of that mediocrity of nature which is incompatible with great actions, submit wisely and cheerfully to your lot. Let no spirit of revenge tempt you to throw off your loyalty to your country; and to prefer a vicious celebrity to obscurity crowned with piety and virtue. If you can throw new light upon moral truth, or by any exertions multiply the comforts, or confirm the happiness of mankind, this fame guides you to the true ends of your nature. But, in the name of God, as you tremble at retributive justice, and in the name of mankind, if mankind be dear to you, seek not that easy and accursed fame which is gathered in the work of revolutions, and deem it better to be for ever unknown, than to found a momentary name upon the basis of anarchy and irreligion.

There is a wearisome and sickly affectation of feeling unfavourable to the love of our country; there are men, by whom the people are spoken of in terms of the warmest compassion, to whom government conveys no other notion than that of a vast conspiracy against human happiness, and in whose minds the different orders of society are considered to be in a state of essential hostility against each other. A poor man is necessarily an oppressed man, and a rich man necessarily a tyrant; and the day of political salvation is looked for, when the valleys are to be exalted, and the hills laid low, crooked rendered straight, and the rough places plain.

If such be commonly the errors of the young, the faults of

those more conversant with the world are, I am afraid, of a less favourable complexion. Whatever virtues may increase with age, the virtue of patriotism is not amongst the number. It is in truth a matter of some wonder that so many men of irreproachable honesty in private life, should be so totally devoid of public virtue; not only devoid of it in practice, but in theory. Every sneer against the duties we owe to the public is received with complacency, and considered as proceeding from a thorough knowledge of life and mankind; and to talk seriously of the love of our country, is political artifice, or youthful declamation. Nor are these public sins at all infamous in the eyes of the world; men of undoubted guilt move in the same circles they moved before, and with increased consideration, if their crimes be upon a large scale, and they have bartered morality for a dignified price. Decided and immediate infamy follows treason to individual trust. When *one* man suffers from fraud and injustice, every honest heart is up in arms. Is dishonesty less dishonesty because the number of the sufferers is increased, and the evil subdivided amongst a whole country? The limits of private fraud are narrow, and its effect of no long duration. Public dishonesty may entail misery upon a whole people, and the unborn infant may suffer for the laxity and corruption of preceding times. Has our Saviour given us such strict rules for our conduct to each other, and left us to the free exercise of every bad and licentious passion when we sin only against the public? Is it against narrow and partial crimes that he has threatened the wrath of God, and has he flung open the doors of Heaven to magnificent villany and boundless pollution? He who sins against the public has no true religion of God; he has no honour, which is the religion of the world: he abstains from crimes against individuals, because he knows that loss of reputation is loss of interest, and gives loose to his baseness, when profit invites and impunity permits; if he lived in worse times, when the standard of morals was still lower, he would defraud his neighbour, he would forfeit his word; his pretended virtues are maxims of convenience; he has no guardian conscience, no protecting principle; there waves not in his breast that flaming sword which turns every way to drive off that which is evil, and to guard the tree of life; he does not feel that he is as accountable to God in every public as in every private transaction of his life; that he is bound to perform those duties which may

affect the country at large, with the same delicate and inflexible justice which he would exhibit on ordinary occasions, and not to be base, because he can be base with impunity; that he ought to probe to the quick every, the least motive to public fraud and to public corruption, even though the wrong should be divided, and subdivided amongst millions and millions of people; he remembers not that they only can enter into the holy tabernacle of God who *have clean hands and a pure heart.*

There is a crime committed against the country, in times of its adversity, which is certainly of the most sordid and selfish nature; that men who derive not only protection, but opulence, from a country in the days of its prosperity, should upon any appearance of alarm, be ever ready to retire with person and property to other countries, is a principle subversive of all political union whatsoever. What nation could exist for a moment, if, in the day of danger and war, when the kingdoms were gathered together against her, she saw her treasures dispersed, and her children fled? Are we not all linked together by language, by birth, by habits, by opinions, by virtues, for worse, for better, for glory, for shame, for peace, for war, for plenty, for want? Will you shudder to interweave your destiny with the destiny of your country? Can you possibly think of your own security when your land is weary and fainting because of her great afflictions? And when all whom you know and love can die and suffer, would you alone live and rejoice? *If I forget thee, Oh Jerusalem! let my right hand forget her cunning: If I do not remember thee in the time of my trouble, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth.*

It is sometimes good to be content with doing little; the great and splendid occasions in which a man can benefit his country are few; the humble duties by which her benefit may be advanced are of daily occurrence; such, among others, is the duty of example: it is not enough to ascertain that actions be innocent as to ourselves; they must be innocent as to the effect they produce upon others; the consequences of some levity or omission to you may be unimportant; but they are not unimportant to those who are guilty of the same thing because you are, and will be guilty of it with far other talents, other habits, and other dispositions than yourself. This kind of patriotism is, I am afraid, rare enough; indeed, men great in talents and rank found some-

what of their reputation upon not doing what the rest of the world do, by which the one would have their superior talents inferred, and the other their superior condition. Such, I am afraid, is the unworthy shame of being thought capable of attending to minutiæ, which robs us of the invaluable benefit of example.

I cannot conclude this subject of love to our country, without animadverting to that species of it which consists in a firm and spirited combination against the unjust aggression and dangerous insolence of a foreign power; and in all the history of successful resistance to outrageous tyranny, (a short and beautiful page in the annals of man,) there is no instance more marked and more illustrious than that which this empire has so recently displayed to the world.*

The whole force of the most powerful people in Europe was guided to our destruction by exquisite talents, unshackled from the fear of God or man. Their warlike spirit was blown into an enthusiasm which Mahomet could never kindle in his savage Arabians, when he came forth, like these modern fanatics, to blot out the name of Christ, and to dim the glory of Christendom; onwards they went, deceiving the simple, and conquering the brave; bringing to their foes death, to their friends freedom worse than death; but plundering, insulting, and confounding all. Men's hearts were melted in the midst of them; there was neither council nor conduct in Europe; a deep-seated earthquake seemed to heave up the basis of civil life, and the tribunals of men, and the thrones of monarchs, and the temples of God, were shaken to the lowest atom of their structure. What was the firm, dignified, and manly conduct of this country? We stood up for human happiness, and spurning from us the luxuries of peace, unfurled a banner to the nations, under which the good, and the honourable, and the wise might range; and with as much moderation as security would permit, and with as much courage as man could display, through internal disaffection, and through mutiny, and through open rebellion, and through two awful visitations of famine for many long years, we have maintained this great fight. What evils are still in preparation for us, what we are yet doomed to suffer, it is painful and difficult to conceive; upon the success of the contest which we are now carrying on, depends the tremendous

* This Sermon was written during the French Revolution.

question, whether Europe shall or shall not be visited by a long period of political struggles; and liberal arts, domestic happiness, and rational piety be forgotten and destroyed in the sorrows and the fury of revolutions. Our feelings are just now a little blunted from the long continuation of the danger; but no man can seriously turn his eyes to the position of the world, without being sensible, that till this great gulf be passed over, every hope of honest ambition, every wish for repose, every feeling which warms the heart, may be but a new cause of misery and despair. From all these evils may the solid understanding and watchful courage of this country, guided and blessed by the providence of God, protect and defend us; and may he shelter, with his Almighty power, a humane, a generous, and an ancient people, who may now, perhaps, be destined to preserve to the human race those indelible rights of our nature, of which they were the first to teach them the value and the use.

SERMON XIV.

ON SKEPTICISM.

Let the lying lips be put to silence, which cruelly, disdainfully, and maliciously speak against the righteous.—PSALM XXXI. VERSE 20.

To neglect those floating imputations and popular calumnies which are in circulation against any system either moral, religious or political, is rather magnanimous than wise, and savours more of a generous contempt for danger, than of prudent precaution against it. Bold assertions and specious invectives often repeated, begin at last to be credited; we hear the calumny so often united to its object, that the mention of the one almost mechanically introduces the notion of the other; and we are betrayed into dangerous prejudices, rather by a principle of association than by any decision of the judgment.

There is too, besides, a fashion in thinking as in everything else, and the giddy part of mankind must ever appear in the newest philosophy, and the most admired system of ethics, or depravity, which the day has to exhibit. In an age of devotion, they lead in hypocrisy, regulate the punctilios of supplication, and adjust all the modes and minutiæ of piety. In an age of philosophy, they are the first to disbelieve in the immortality of the soul, to discredit the evidence of their senses, and to doubt of, discredit, and deride everything else which the rules of fashionable skepticism require.

If there be any truth in this, and if the world be led to such unreasonable conclusions from such unreasonable causes, it is important to remark the modes of thinking of the times, and to select for animadversion, those trite, but prevailing opinions which endanger the well-being of society.

It is a leading object with skeptics, to bring into disrepute the character of Christianity, of its teachers and adherents; and one mode by which they attempt it is, by attaching to all mention of these subjects, the ideas of intolerance, bigotry and narrowness of mind;—the opposite virtues they ascribe to their own sect, as candour, liberality, the spirit of discussion, and an exemption from every human prejudice; and such, (as I have before remarked,) are the effects of invective, and assertion frequently repeated, that those who have not formed to themselves precise notions of what these operative terms imply, and who have not learned the necessity of ascertaining their due application by a steady appeal to facts, are apt to admit both the justice of the imputations which this sect of philosophers make, and of the pretensions to which they aspire.

To the youthful, everything which appears open and generous, is so agreeable, everything which conveys the idea of narrowness, concealment, or deceit, is so obnoxious, that they literally become ashamed of their religion, and feel abashed at their faith, before these men of liberal sentiment and extended inquiry.

It is very easy to see the pernicious consequences to which this will lead; the horror which a young man of talent feels, is the horror of being unknown and unadmired; he cannot wait to think of distant consequences, the parade of disbelief is too tempting for him, and he becomes a deist; a little time elapses, and from the same vanity of extending (or appearing to extend) investigation, he begins to call in question a superintending Providence, and a sense of right and wrong; and descending through a long train of theories and systems, from bad to worse, he subsides into a state of complete skepticism upon every question whatsoever. Is this a spectacle which it is possible for any human being to behold with indifference? A young man standing on the threshold of life, and just going into all the business of the world, with a heart in which every principle of right and wrong is thoroughly shaken and impaired! If not destined for great offices in public life, yet he is a brother, a son, a friend; he is to be a husband, and a father of children; some must trust him, and some must love him. Call it bigotry, and cover these notions with mockery and derision; but I say it would be better for this young man, that the work of death were going on within him, that the strength and the roses of his

youth were fading away, and that he were wasting down to the tombs of his ancestors, wept by his friends, and pitied by the world.

If I am right in considering these effects to be so pernicious, let us examine on what foundation such high-minded pretensions rest, and whether there be any set of men who have a right to consider themselves as so far advanced beyond their fellow-creatures in the spirit of wisdom, and to look down upon the rest of mankind with anger and contempt.

In speaking of those who disbelieve in Christianity, I am very far from including, in my observations, every person of this description.

The truth of Christianity rests upon its own internal evidence, and the evidence of history. It is impossible to account for the aberrations of human reason; evidence of the strongest kind is daily excepted to by men of unquestionable talents and sincerity; to us the proofs of the truth of our religion appear manifest and strong; that they shall not appear so to others is certainly possible, because every irrational conclusion is possible. Whoever has examined the question with that candid and investigating spirit which its extreme importance demands: whoever respects, with an amiable and principled modesty, the common belief of mankind on this topic, however it may differ from his own particular persuasion; whoever would rather conceal what he considers to be an exemption from prejudice, and a proof of superior talent in himself, than weaken any religious restraint, or impair any virtuous principle in the bosom of any one human being; whoever believes it possible for a Christian to be thoroughly impressed with the truth of his religion, without forfeiting all pretensions to sincerity, to talent, and to learning; against such a man I am not now lifting up my voice; may God enlighten his darkness, and convert his heart! But it is that sect of men I am endeavouring to single out, who, in all the common intercourse of life, obtrude upon you their blasphemy and their skepticism; who pant to tell you they have no God; and are restless till they have convinced you they have trampled under foot every pleasant hope and every decent restriction in life; who think that a few silly pleasantries and slender arguments are a sufficient preparation to decide on these proofs of a future life; men who (while they think they have monopolized all liberal sentiment, and all acute inquiry), are persecuting in their toleration,

bigoted in their liberality, and furious in their moderation. These are the men who have made the very name of philosophy a term of reproach; who have been the cause, that the plea of liberality cannot now be heard without a sneer of suspicion; these are they who have destroyed, in the mass of mankind, all veneration for the labours of speculative wisdom; who have really put back the world, diminished every rational hope of improvement; and by bringing the whole healing art into disrepute, have made men cleave to their ulcers and their pains, and shudder at the hand which is held out to offer them relief.

In their depreciation of religion, and the religious, persons of skeptical opinions are accustomed to make a very copious use of history; they can from thence show, that there was a period when men were utterly debarred from all freedom of opinion upon religious subjects, when this intolerance was manifested in the most cruel persecutions, by an artful and ambitious priesthood, who governed and who pillaged the world.

These facts may be true; but they do not justify the inferences which are drawn from them. If everything is to be considered as bad in itself, which is capable of being abused, liberty, wealth, learning, and power, ought rather to be the objects of our aversion than our choice; every good principle has been at times perverted; every good institution has been gradually elaborated from the sufferings and afflictions of the world: man, doubly wretched, slowly toils on to perfection, earning his bread by the sweat of his brow, and his wisdom by the sorrows of his heart.

But what, it may be asked, have these historical imputations, these invectives of rolls and records, to do with the principles and practice of the present day; a day in which the pretensions of every class of men are kept in due bounds by the enlightened condition of all, and in which every one is left to worship God according to his own ideas of truth? The object is not to show what establishments have been, and what Christianity has been in dark ages, but to show the natural spirit and tendency of both. If it can be shown that there is anything in the Christian religion necessarily connected with bigotry and intolerance, this objection would be pertinent and powerful; but to suppose that a Christian is a bigot now, because there were very few Christians who were not so three hundred years ago, is to suppose the exist-

ence of principles and causes which every cool, unprejudiced mind perceives to have long ago lost their influence upon mankind. We have nothing to do but to make this malicious anachronism more general, and we shall say, that natural philosophy is conjecture, the medical art empiricism, and law a system of ingenious depredation, because there have been periods in which these sciences were all exposed to such imputations.

The fact is, (and such I believe to be the opinion of every man who loves truth more than party, let his religious opinions be what they may,) that a disbelief, not only in Christianity, but in a superintending Providence, is traveling down from the metaphysician to the common haunts and ordinary scenes of life; that men are giving up the practical morality of the Gospel, and the true and wholesome terror of a God, who have no beautiful and classical theory of morals to substitute in its place, but who, if they are not Christians, must be wild beasts. These are the dangers which now threaten us; we have not, in the present state of the world, to fear that we shall be manacled again by superstition, but that the golden chain which reaches from heaven to earth, should be broken asunder, and not one link of it again be found.

If philosophy be a love of knowledge, evinced by an ardent and able pursuit of it, there can surely be nothing to exclude the firm believer in Christianity from every honourable distinction which this appellation can convey. The subject which engages his attention is unquestionably superior in importance to every other which can occupy the wit of man; the prosecution of it involves wide historical research, much curious and delicate examination of evidence, much labour, and many vigils of the mind; and he who gets up from these studies a sincere Christian, is, for aught I know, as much a philosopher as the atheist who has studied away his soul, elaborated his theory of annihilation from whole libraries, and given up one life to discover there is no other.

A great many human beings must take their religion upon trust; few have leisure, and few have talents, for speculative inquiries; but let me ask, which is the more commendable and noble, to believe in Christianity without proof, or to disbelieve in it without proof? A modest coincidence with received opinions above our faculties, or an affected contempt of them? Whether there is a more disgusting spectacle than

arrogant mediocrity? Whether we cannot more easily allow for that inclination which bends towards a religion of comfortable promise, than that which leans to a system of cold despondency? Whether there is not something pleasant in seeing our fellow-creatures cling to a faith which arranges the world, and cheers it? And if it is not afflicting to behold that depraved appetite for misery and despair which induces men to yield up their assent to a system of incredulity, without being acquainted in the smallest degree with the reasons on which it is founded?

Those who are so fond of preferring the charge of bigotry against Christians should remember how intimately this attachment to our opinions is interwoven in our constitution, and how much more likely it is to display itself upon subjects of such extreme importance as that of religion: whoever has made Christianity his rule of action in this world, and his hope in the next, whose original conviction has been strengthened by habit, and warmed by devotion, and can bear in this tenour of mind, to hear that he has been believing in a fable, that his labour is lost, and his hope illusive; whoever can bear to hear these assertions, and to discuss them without transgressing the rules of candour, possesses the love of truth in a degree truly inimitable, for he risks all his happiness in pursuit of it. But if, in spite of this plea of mitigation, the want of candour be so offensive in a Christian, what shall we say to that most extraordinary of all characters, a bigoted skeptic? who resists the force of proof where he has every temptation to be convinced, who ought to pant for refutation, and to bless the man who has reasoned him to silence? Bigotry in him is the pure unadulterated vice; it is not the fear of losing an opinion on which his happiness depends, but the fear of losing an opinion merely because it is an opinion; and this is the very essence of obstinacy and pride.

Where men pretend to nothing, the world is indulgent to their faults; but it well behoves those who lord it in word and thought over the rest of mankind, that they be consistent in their conduct, and perfectly free from those faults which they so liberally impute to others. Ignorance, bigotry and illiberality are bad enough in their simple state; but when men of slender information, narrow views and obstinate dispositions, insult the feelings, and despise the understandings of such of their fellow-creatures who have fixed their faith in an amiable and benevolent religion, we are called upon

by common sense and by common spirit, to resist, and to extinguish this dynasty of fools.

To those great men on whom God has breathed a larger portion of his spirit, whom he has sent into the world to enlarge the empire of talent and of truth, mankind will ever pay a loyal obedience: they are our natural leaders; they are the pillars of fire which brighten the darkness of the night, and make straight the paths of the wilderness; they must move on before us; but while we give loose to our natural veneration for great talents, let us not mistake laxity for liberality, the indelicate boldness of a froward disposition for the grasping strength and impulsive curiosity of an original mind; let us steadily discountenance the efforts of bad men, and of shallow men, to darken the distinctions between right and wrong; to bring into ridicule and contempt the religion of their country; and to gratify some popular talent at the expense of the dearest interests of mankind.

Bigotry and intolerance are their terms of alarm; but do not imagine that bigotry and intolerance are the creatures of religion, and not the creatures of atheism,—wherever ignorance, wherever passion, wherever insolence reside,—you will see the same blind and bloated vehemence idly struggling with the wildness of human thought, and bending the elastic mind of man to its own little standard of truth. The infidel clings as tenaciously to what he denies, as the religionist does to what he affirms;—arm him with power, will he be more tolerant?—will he suffer you to build temples? to pray openly to your God, and to insult his doubts with the profession of a faith, which, in the deep wickedness of his heart, he judges to be the consummation of all absurdity? —Toleration is the creature of benevolence and of wisdom; what have the shallow sneers and scoffings of infidelity to do with this heavenly forbearance? do not be mocked by such idle pretensions; if atheism ever rears its head among men, piety will mourn and bleed; the broken heart must no longer cry aloud in prayer; they will stop the song of the priest; they will pull down thy altars, oh Israel, even to the ground.

To that small, but invaluable class of men who have steadily kept down the natural tendency to violence, and who have such an exquisite tact for truth, that they can extract it pure from the fury and misrepresentation of all parties, are we to look for our barrier against the danger with which we appear

to be threatened. To such men, this madness of incredulity and lust of doubt will be a matter of uniform resistance and profound regret; they will know that the path assigned to human reason, though lofty, is limited, and they will sigh over her present excess, as well as her original imbecility; as the steady friends of human nature they will never believe that the cause of real improvement is advanced by men who are neither profound in the theory of religion, nor pure in its practice; against such men they will bend the brow, and shut the heart, and exert the real authority they possess in the world, "to put to silence the lips which cruelly, disdainfully, and despitefully, speak against the righteous."

SERMON XV.

THE POOR MAGDALENE.

PREACHED BEFORE THE SCOTCH MAGDALENE SOCIETY.

Daughter, thy sins are forgiven thee.—LUKE VII. VERSE 48.

THE little narrative of which this text is a part, presents so beautiful a picture of profound sorrow and virtuous humiliation, that I am sure you will excuse me, if I give it you more in detail.

"Behold a woman in the city, which was a sinner, when she knew that Jesus sat at meat, stood behind him, weeping, and began to wash his feet with her tears, and did wipe them with the hairs of her head, and kissed his feet, and anointed them with ointment; and he turned to the woman, and said to Simon, seest thou this woman? I entered into thine house, thou gavest me no water for my feet; but she hath washed my feet with her tears, and dried them with the hairs of her head. Thou gavest me no kiss: but this woman, since the time I came in, hath not ceased to kiss my feet. Mine head with oil thou didst not anoint; but this woman hath anointed my head with ointment: Daughter, thy sins are forgiven thee."

There is something in the sorrow of this poor, unknown woman, which is touching and sublime: A delicate spirit, abashed with the wisdom, and purity of Jesus, a lowliness which forbade lamentation, a remorse which precluded hope, a heart broken with public scorn and inward shame. She said nothing, she had no hope of mercy, nor dream of salvation for her soul; but giving loose to that enthusiasm for the good, from which the worst of our species are not wholly exempt, and remembering, perhaps, the days when she was innocent and happy, she never ceased to wash the feet of

Jesus with her tears, and to dry them with the hairs of her head.

Jesus did not reject this poor creature; he forgave her sins; and you bless the mercy of your Saviour. Bear then in mind this picture, and imitate that mercy which you love. The poor women in whose behalf I am this day to plead, present themselves before you with the deepest shame, and the most profound contrition: they are fully sensible of their unworthiness; they would kiss the ground on which you tread; they would wash your feet with their tears: have mercy on them, for they are wretched; and if you cannot forgive their sins, at least alleviate their sorrows.

Before I enter at length upon this subject, it may be necessary to state to you, that the principal object with the society, now called the Magdalene Society, is to reclaim unhappy and deluded females from a vicious course of life, to inure them to habits of industry, to reconcile them to their families, and restore them to a sense of religion. It is nearly two years since this Society was first founded; and during that time forty-four women have been admitted to the benefit of the institution. You will be curious to know the result, and I will lay it before you with the greatest candour. In some women the habits of vice have been found so deeply fixed, that it was not possible to eradicate them; such have of course been dismissed from the asylum, though by no means wholly abandoned: The salvation of a fellow-creature has been always deemed, by those who superintend this institution, as much too sacred an object to be given up while activity could suggest a single effort, which reason could sanction. But I have the greatest pleasure in assuring you, that the cares of the Society have been eminently successful in by far the greatest number of instances; and that many poor women who would (but for this) have dragged on a wretched and ignominious life, have been reconciled to their parents, received into reputable families as servants, and placed, by a sense of their past misery and present comfort, beyond the rational probability of relapse. There are at present twenty women in the house; and the frequent application for admission, from the most miserable objects possible, which the contracted state of their funds has compelled the society to reject, has occasioned this appeal to the charity of the public.

It must not be dissembled, that there are some respectable,

and well-meaning people unfavourable to this institution, from a conception that it encourages vice: that women, who have so far forgotten every principle of virtue, ought to be abandoned to their fate; and that to take so lively an interest in the situation and circumstances of such depraved characters, is neither proper in itself, nor encouraging to those who are virtuous and good.

But if it were true, that a facility to escape from the miseries of vice, operates as an inducement to crime, are we wholly to exclude all consideration for the individual sufferer, and render wretchedness coeval with life, for the sake of public example? Vice besides does not originate from computation of probabilities, and accurate adjustment of future good and evil, but from ignorance, weak notions of duty, bad government of the mind, and dangerous situation. Let us advert to the real facts. A poor young creature, allured from the country, perhaps, by idle dreams of wealth and ambition, is placed in the middle of a large town, far removed from her parents and friends, and exposed to every temptation which the most infamous artifices can suggest. Bad must he be, indeed, who would think to palliate a crime here in the face of God, and the people: but feeling as I do most deeply for the poor women whose cause I have undertaken, it is my duty to bring to your remembrance, those circumstances which fixed their ill-fated destiny, and made them what they are, the daughters of affliction; degraded; suppliants to God and man. It is no imaginary picture I paint to you, but the crimes of real life. I repeat again, that the most atrocious artifices are daily put in practice against the lower class of women, and by men in whom religion, education, and rank in life, ought to have infused far other principles of honour, dignity, and compassion; who, besides all other considerations, ought to know, that he who sacrifices the innocence of a woman, who looks up to her character, and her labour for honest support, gives up a human creature to want, and to crime, to untimely depravity, and to early death.

The tender age of many of these poor creatures is a circumstance which pleads powerfully to your compassion. The necessary sacrifice of prudence to poverty, is the source of many vices, as it ought to be of much indulgence, to the lower classes of mankind. At the very period when the child requires most the advice and vigilance of the mother, she is compelled to quit her home for new and dangerous

scenes, and is left to her own fatal guidance, at the most perilous moment of life. There are women in this Society of fifteen and sixteen years of age, fit objects truly of that pious compassion they have moved, and that fatherly protection they have received; thus while the human body slowly toils on to its last stature, and the soul late unfolds its power, and its might, every bad passion is swift to increase, and before nature has finished her work, vice has sunk it to decay.

You feel less pity for these women, perhaps, because you associate to their former life, riot, extravagance, and mad luxury: rather associate to it the feelings of infamy, of hunger, of remorse, of houseless, friendless, and unpitied want: The sufferings of the respectable poor are bad enough; but if you will fathom to the lowest the misery of our nature, look to the union of poverty and vice. Behold the dying prostitute, so joyous once, so innocent, and so good, behold her in some dismal recess of a crowded city, slowly yielding up her life to sorrow and to pain. So lies this poor forgotten creature, without the blessing of parents, or the voice of kinsmen, or the sweet counsel of friends, and when you see her face pale with weakness and her limbs withered with disease, and her dwelling loathsome from want, forget not that she has yet a sorrow which no human eye can reach, the remembrance of a mis-spent life has broken her heart; and though she send forth no plaintive voice, and though she shed no idle tear, she is mastered by an unknown spirit within, and sinks sadly down to her long and lasting home.

To such scenes as these, sound policy and genuine piety unite to call your attention; to educate, to reclaim, to diffuse morality and religion, is the most comprehensive wisdom and the truest philanthropy. If laws give efficacy to morals, morals give efficacy to laws; and it is rather, perhaps, in the disposition to obey, than in the power to enact, that the security for human happiness consists.

The number of these deluded women is so great, and their sufferings, in process of time, so lamentable, that, considered by themselves, they become an object of political interference, and Christian compassion; considered as to its general effects, the increase or diminution of this species of profligacy, becomes of the highest civil importance. Who, then, shall set bounds to those labours which go to increase the sum of virtue in a state; or who shall assign the precise limits where

the work of reformation shall stop, and the bad be abandoned? If education have been tried in vain, we will set to work the great engine of repentance, which rests upon experience, and model afresh the human mind softened by affliction. The fears of mankind are in general resorted to, rather than their ductility; and it is more common to punish than reclaim; a supposed necessity alone can justify this rough melioration of our species; but the voluntary labours of the truly good and respectable men who preside over this Society, show you that no such necessity exists, and deserve your warmest protection, as they substitute for severity, persuasion, and effect the purest end by the gentlest means.

The great attention which has always been paid to reconcile reclaimed children to their parents, is a very pleasing feature in the conduct of this charity; the protection and countenance of the parent give stability to the new virtue of the child; and the renewal of this endearing relation is strictly congenial to our most lively feelings.

A young female was received some time since into the Society, who, in consequence of the infamous character she had incurred, had been wholly abandoned by her poor, but respectable parents, for above four years. You all know the extreme care with which the poor people attend to the religious and moral education of their children in this part of the world; and will, I am sure, in the goodness of your hearts, anticipate the feelings of two poor villagers as they speculated on the future prospects of their late beloved inmate, their fears for her safety, their humble ambition, their hope that they had not in vain suffered want for her improvement, their ardent prayer to Almighty God for their child. Not to dwell upon intermediate scenes, by the interference of the Society; the father agreed to receive his daughter, and they were brought together; the appearance of each, just before they met, was wonderfully impressive: In the child there were marks of the deepest contrition and humility; a sense of joy, at the idea of seeing her father, mingled with a perturbation which bordered on delirious wildness; in the poor man there was an honest shame at the disgrace which his daughter had incurred, not wholly devoid of anger; but it was easy to see how much his compassion ruled over every other feeling of his mind. Such was the interesting appearance of these poor people before they met; but when they saw each other, there was no shame, there was no dread, there was no anger,

there was no contrition; but there were tears, and cries, and loud sobbings, and convulsive embraces, and the father wept over his daughter, and loved her; and they that saw this, bear witness how blessed a thing it is to snatch a human soul from perdition, to show the paths of God to poor sinners, and to shower down the glories of virtue and religion on the last and the lowest of mankind. Will you then suffer me to plead to you in vain, in such a cause as this? Will you suffer such a noble, and rational charity to perish now at its birth? Will you turn back these half reclaimed women, when you have taught them the full measure of their sin and wretchedness? Or, if a human being say to you, I am doing wrong; I am sinning against God, and man; I am wretched; I know not where to turn; pity me, and show me the paths of eternal life; will you drive back the penitent to her sins, and rage with all the severity of law, and censure when you have refused the benefit of preventive instruction?

I could speak to you for hours on this charity; but I have the firmest reliance on that rational goodness, so characteristic of this country, and before which no true object of misery ever presented itself in vain. Let me beg of you to take the nature and views of this society into your most serious consideration, and only to promote them as in your cool judgment you shall deem them important to the interest of true religion and social order, and sanctioned, as I most firmly believe them to be, by every moral probability of success.

But do not trust to the faded impressions of representation: Scenes of moral improvement are always gratifying, and always instructive: view with your own eyes the strict order and decency which pervade this institution; converse with the humble penitents, and hear what they will tell you of the horrors from which they have been rescued, of their present comfort, and their hopes of immortality revived. The most delicate and amiable woman need not blush to countenance with her presence, this school of moral emendation: To be noticed by their superiors in rank, animates the exertions of these women, and lightens the task of reformation; and there is something in the sight of living purity (such as it does often live in gentle and gracious women), that makes the heart wiser and better in an instant, than the most spirited harangues on the nature, and glowing descriptions of the excellence of virtue.

My fellow Christians, and my brothers, hear now my last

words before you quit this solemn place, and return to the business and bustle of the world. Half a century will scarce elapse, and every being here present will be dead; new men, and new events will occupy the world, and the dreaded pit of oblivion will shut over us all. Is the thought of an hereafter dear to you? Is it your care to meet the great God with good deeds? Have pity then on these forlorn women; for if you have no pity on them, they will speedily be forsaken by all: lay up a sweet remembrance for the evil day; and know, that the best mediation with God Almighty, the Father, and his Son of mercy, and love, is the prayer of a human being whom you have saved from perdition.

SERMON XVI.

UPON THE BEST MODE OF CHARITY.

For the poor shall never cease out of the land: Therefore, I command thee, saying, Thou shalt open thine hand wide unto thy brother, to thy poor, and to thy needy in the land.—DEUTERONOMY XV. VERSE 11.

I DO not propose to myself so very comprehensive a subject as that of a general exhortation to charity; but presupposing a due disposition in the minds of my congregation to relieve the wants of their fellow-creatures, I shall take the liberty of suggesting a few remarks upon the proper direction and just government of this amiable virtue.

It is of importance, not only that we should do good, but that we should do it in the best manner. A little judgment, and a little reflection added to the gift, do not merely enhance the value, but often give to it the only value which it possesses; and even prevents that mischief of which thoughtless benevolence is sometimes the cause.

Mankind can never be too strongly, or too frequently cautioned against self-deception. If a state of vice be a state of misery, a state of vice of which we are ignorant is doubly so, from the increased probability of its duration. It is surprising how many men are cheated by flighty sentiments of humanity into a belief that they are humane; how frequently charitable words are mistaken for charitable deeds, and a beautiful picture of misery for an effectual relief of it. There are many who have tears for the chaste and classical sorrow of the stage, who have never submitted to go into the poor man's cottage, to hear his tedious narrative, and to come close at hand with poverty, and its dismal and disgusting attendants. Pure moral misery, wrought up into an artful tale, is a luxurious banquet for the refined mind, which would

turn away from the gross unhappiness of real life, where the low and the ludicrous are mingled with the sad, where our delicacy is offended, while our feelings are roused, and we are reminded, not only of the misfortunes, but of the infirmities of man. A state of delicate sensibility in the moral feelings is commendable, or blameworthy, according to the consequences to which it leads: If strong impressions of human misery rouse us to the relief of it, they are faithful monitors to virtue, and cannot be too effectually preserved; but if feelings are mere feelings, and do not stimulate us to action, they can answer no other purpose than to display ostentatious softness, or inflict useless suffering; if men indulge in speculations far above the level of real life, the danger is, that they become unfit for action. Who can bear the muddy pool, and the barren sand of the desert, after he has gazed on the beautiful prodigies of a fancy landscape? If we have drawn romantic notions of misfortune, and annexed to it the ideas of venerable, simple, docile, and grateful, we shall soon become disgusted with the practice of charity, and fly back to the reveries of speculative benevolence, as an asylum from the disappointments we meet with in the world, as it is really constituted.

Another important point in the administration of charity, is a proper choice of the object we relieve. To give promiscuously is better, perhaps, than not to give at all. But instead of risking the chance of encouraging imposture, discover some worthy family struggling up against the world, a widow with her helpless children, old people incapable of labour, or orphans destitute of protection and advice; suppose you were gradually to attach yourselves to such real objects of compassion, to learn their wants, to stimulate their industry, and to correct their vices; surely these two species of charity are not to be compared together in the utility, or in the extent of their effects; in the benevolence they evince or in the merits they confer. If you wish to gratify the feelings or avoid the reproaches of your heart, with as little trouble to yourself as possible, you may lavish your bounty upon the first object you meet, without knowing whether you are gratifying vice, or relieving want; this is a kind of middle course, which, though it fall far short of the dignity of virtue, keeps up a sort of comfortable delusion, and reconciles us in some measure to ourselves. Whereas, he who is charitable, not from constitutional feelings, but

from a wide, strong, and imperative sense of duty, will remember, that he owes to the poor, not only that which he gives, but he owes to them the happy application and judicious distribution of the gift; he owes to them a certain portion of his time and intelligence; the exercise of that influence which education, wealth, and manners always have, and always ought to have upon the lower orders of mankind. This is the steady, enlightened compassion of an ample mind and a good heart; this is that vigilant and wise benevolence which makes happy cottages and smiling villages, and fills the spirit of a just man with unspeakable delight. This patronage or adoption of the indigent, places the poor under the critical inspection of their superiors; it blends those who want control, with those who can exercise it; it gives to the rich a taste for doing good; to the poor, a love and veneration for rank and power; diffuses civilization, and has a wonderful effect in promoting good order and general improvement. Those who have taken notice of the very striking difference between such villages in the country, where the poor are deserted by their natural guides and leaders, and those where they have some truly good model to look up to, will, I am sure, need no other proof of the justice of these remarks.

The true reason why this species of charity is so rarely practised is, that we are afraid of imposing such a severe task upon our indolence; though in truth, all these kinds of difficulties are extremely overrated. When once we have made ourselves acquainted with a poor family, and got into a regular train of seeing them at intervals, the trouble is hardly felt, and the time scarcely missed; and if it is missed, ought it to be missed? Shall we lay out a whole life in the acquisition of knowledge, and in the pursuit of wealth? Shall we pawn our souls to party, and to ambition, and grudge those few moments which we give up to solid deeds of virtue, the only deeds we shall look back on with pleasure, when old age, and death near at hand, show us the world in another and in a true light? Can we find leisure for all the intricacies of business and science, and no leisure to reconcile the man to his own heart? Shall we go to our grave, knowing all wisdom but the best? "*If*," says Job, in the midst of his afflictions, "*if I have withheld the poor from their desire, or have caused the eyes of the widow to fail, or have eaten my morsel alone, and the fatherless have not eaten thereof: If I have seen any perish for want of covering, or*

any poor without clothing; if his loins have not blessed me, and if he were not warmed with the fleece of my sheep: If I have lifted up my arm against the fatherless when I saw my help in the gate: then let mine arm be broken from the bone, and let it fall from my shoulder blade."

These charitable visits to the poor, which I have endeavoured to inculcate, are of importance, not only because they prevent imposture, by making you certain of the misery which you relieve, but because they produce an appeal to the senses which is highly favourable to the cultivation of charity. He who only knows the misfortunes of mankind at second hand, and by description, has but a faint idea of what is really suffered in the world. A want of charity is not always to be attributed to a want of compassion. The seeds of this virtue are too deeply fixed in the human constitution, to be easily eradicated: but the appeal to this class of feelings is not sufficiently strong; men do not put themselves into situations where such feelings are liable to be called forth: they judge of the misfortunes of the poor through the medium of the understanding, not from the lively and ardent pictures of sensation. We feel it may be said, the eloquence of description; but what is all the eloquence of art, to that mighty and original eloquence with which nature pleads her cause; to the eloquence of paleness and of hunger; to the eloquence of sickness and of wounds; to the eloquence of extreme old age, of helpless infancy, of friendless want! What persuasives like the melancholy appearance of nature badly supported, and that fixed look of sadness, which a long struggle with misfortune rivets on the human countenance! What pleadings so powerful as the wretched hovels of the poor, and the whole system of their comfortless economy!—These are the moments in which the world and its follies are forgotten, which throw the mind into a new attitude of solemn thought, which have rescued many a human being from dissipation and crime, which have given birth to many admirable characters, and multiplied, more than all exhortation, the friends of man, and the disciples of Christ.

In truth, if these observations be anywhere applicable or necessary, it is in great cities that they are peculiarly so; for as misery increases with vice, and dissipation extinguishes charity, the poor suffer more, and meet with less relief, at least with less of that kind of relief which proceeds from the exertions and interference of individuals. Far be it from me,

in talking of the dissipation of great cities, to wage war with the innocent pleasures of life; with youth there should be joy, for the best days of life are soon fled; but the danger is, that amidst the constant enjoyments and diversions of society, the heart should become callous, and lose that noble irritability, that moral life, which is the parent of all that is good in the world. Enchanting as the pleasures of society appear, they would still derive an additional charm from the consciousness that you deserved to enjoy them, that you had acquired a right to be happy, from having made others so; and that an evening of innocent gayety was earned by a morning of virtuous exertion.

You are not, I hope, of opinion, that these kind of cares devolve upon the clergy alone, as the necessary labours of their profession. Those who teach Christianity, ought certainly to be most forward in every Christian exertion; but, unquestionably, it is not from them alone that these exertions are expected, but from every one whose faith teaches and whose fortune enables him to be humane. I have touched on this point, because such an opinion, though too absurd to be openly avowed, is not too absurd for that crude and hasty palliation with which we smother the conscience that we cannot satisfy.

Nor let it be imagined that the duties which I have pointed out are much less pressing and imperative, because the law has taken to itself the protection of the poor; the law must hold out a scanty and precarious relief, or it would encourage more misery than it relieved; the law cannot distinguish between the poverty of idleness and the poverty of misfortune; the law degrades those whom it relieves; and many prefer wretchedness to public aid; do not, therefore, spare yourselves from a belief that the poor are well taken care of by the civil power; and that individual interference is superfluous;—many a hand is held up, and no man seeth it; many a groan is wasted in the air, many die in secret, and like the moments of the day, they perish and are forgotten. Go then, while good days are yet left to you, go into the house of mourning, under the roof of affliction, and mingle with the old, the wretched, and the sad: bow down thy spirit with them, and chasten thy soul with their sorrow;—when thy feet sound on the threshold of the door, the widowed woman shall say there is bread for us today; children shall flock about thee, and thou shalt be to them as a God; ancient people shall have joy in their last days because of thee; thy mind shall be moved within thee, and the

bread, and the estate of the poor and oppressed shall be precious in thine eyes.

Many are charitable in order to enjoy the luxury of gratitude; an accidental good if it comes, but an unworthy motive for benevolence, because it makes the virtue to depend upon the caprice of the individual towards whom it is exercised. For the permanent and unchangeable rule of religion, it gives me a rule which varies with the feelings of every wretched being whom I relieve. If my taste is gratified with the display of every proper sentiment, I am compassionate; but the slightest disgust is sufficient to avert me from one of the highest duties of a Christian; I love moral effect more than religious obedience; my principal object is not to relieve human misery, but to excite in my own mind agreeable feeling. The pity which Jesus taught was a modest and invisible pity, thinking only of lightening the heavy heart, trembling at fame, fearful lest any pleasure in the gratitude of man might mingle with the spirit of charity, and pollute the pure sacrifice which it was offering up to God.

To conclude, let us always remember that every charity is short lived and inefficacious, which flows from any other motive than the right. There is a charity which originates from the romantic fiction of humble virtue and innocence in distress; but this will be soon disgusted by low artifice, and scared by brutal vice. The charity which proceeds from ostentation can exist no longer than when its motives remain undetected. There is (as I have just stated), a charity which is meant to excite the feelings of gratitude, but this will meet with its termination in disappointment. That charity alone endures, which flows from a sense of duty, and a hope in God. This is the charity that treads in secret those paths of misery, from which all but the lowest of human wretches have fled; this is that charity which no labour can weary, no ingratitude detach, no horror disgust, that toils, that pardons, that suffers, that is seen by no man, and honoured by no man, but, like the great laws of nature, does the work of God in silence, and looks to future and better worlds for its reward.

SERMON XVII.

ON METHODISM.

I bear them record that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge.—ROMANS X. VERSE 2.

THERE is a sect which, of late years, has been growing into some importance in this country, and which, from the unwearied activity of those who guide it, has been too well received, and too hastily embraced; I mean that sect commonly called Methodists, and who (though less numerous, perhaps, than the friends of our Church Establishment commonly suppose), are still numerous enough, and sufficiently active in making proselytes, and sufficiently successful to justify that watchful attention which they now begin to experience from the Established clergy.

Such attention is still more necessary at this period, when enthusiasm, formerly confined to the lowest ranks of the community, has sprung up among the rich and the great; and when it derives an influence as considerable from the wealth and consequence of those who profess it, as it does from the seductive nature of its doctrines.

Nothing can be more clear, than that any sect has a perfect right to interpret the Gospel after its own manner, or to infuse into its followers, any spirit not incompatible with the public peace. Such are the rights of sects as against the civil power; but against reason and inquiry, no sect is, or ought to be protected; and above all, that sect ought not which proclaims itself to be better and wiser than all other sects, which says, we only worship the true God, salvation is for us alone.

In applying the term sect to persons of this religious persuasion, and in distinguishing them from the Church of England, I do not found that distinction upon the speculative

tenets they profess, but upon the general spirit they display; it is in vain to say you belong to our ancient and venerable communion, if you lose sight of that moderation for which we have always been distinguished, and, instead of sameness of spirit, give us only sameness of belief. You are not of us (whatever your belief may be,) if you are not as sober as we are; you are not of us if you have our zeal without our knowledge; you are not of us if those tenets, which we have always rendered compatible with sound discretion, make you drunk and staggering with the new wine of enthusiasm.

Far be it from me, in pointing out those pernicious consequences, which I believe to result from this sect of Christians, to join with their enemies in the very unjust calumnies which have been propagated against them; I most firmly believe that, for the greater part, they are enthusiasts, not hypocrites; that they are doing what they believe to be right, and though they are not acting up to their very exalted professions, yet that, upon the whole, they are fairly entitled to be called sincere Christians. What may truly be objected to them is, that, meaning to be the friends of religion, they are its greatest enemies; that, wishing to extend the dominion of the Gospel over all hearts, they are alienating from it the best understandings; that, preparing for sacred things, new triumph, and wider glory, they expose sacred things to the derision and scorn of the wicked. I bear them record that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge.

It is true that Methodism, and enthusiasm, are terms often used by the unrighteous, to ridicule piety under whatever aspect of manliness it may be presented, and by whatever soundness of discretion it may be controlled; but, in spite of this, there is a real excess, there is a righteousness overmuch; a zeal not according to knowledge, which is a perpetual injury to true religion: the very name* used to denote it, however unjustly it may be sometimes applied, sufficiently demonstrates among what description of Christians those abuses exist.

When any man whose curiosity may be roused by their high pretensions, or whose feelings may be wounded by their unjust reproaches, first turns his attention upon these members of the Christian Church, there is nothing which so much attracts his notice, or so much offends his notions of real piety,

* Vital Christianity.

as their astonishing arrogance and presumption; they speak as if in their era and at their time God had again vouchsafed to show himself to his people; as if a new dispensation had been accorded to the world, and as if the time was at last arrived when they were permitted to show to mankind the true knowledge of the true God: they speak of men of all other persuasions as the children of darkness and error, pitying the whole world besides themselves, and thanking God with a very needless and impious gratitude, that he has made them so much wiser and better than other human beings. The gratification of this spiritual pride is become in fact, almost one of their religious exercises; it is mingled in all their religious meditations, and become the darling and consolation of their souls; "*God I thank thee, I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican;*" thus spake the Pharisee; "but the publican, standing afar off, would not so much as lift up his eyes to heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, *God be merciful to me a sinner!*" Which of these went home to his house justified rather than the other? And of whom did Christ speak this parable? He spake it (says St. Luke) *unto certain men which trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others.* It is absolutely necessary, in order to prevent the young from being imposed upon by these lofty pretensions, to protest against them in the plainest and most serious manner; they are so far from being proofs of pure and genuine religion, that they are the almost infallible characteristics of vulgar and unblushing fanaticism. The most mistaken and impetuous enthusiasts have all begun in the same manner, have all arrogantly and studiously depreciated every other mode of worship, have all grasped at the monopoly of piety and reason. It is not the practice of the Church of England to do these things; it is not the habit of her ministers to speak insultingly or to think arrogantly of those who worship the same God, however different be the mode of that adoration; she prefers her own doctrine; but she prefers it without boasting and without invidious comparison; she derives from her antiquity calm and dignified satisfaction, and from her experience, the high blessings of moderation and forbearance; but, when these vain and mistaken zealots tell her that she is superannuated, and decayed, that she is oppressed by the languor of age, and unstrung by the indolence of success; that she should rebuild her altars after their model, and speak to the God of heaven

as they speak; when this is the part assumed by men whose predominant notion of religion seems to be that it is something removed as far from common sense as possible, it is then surely time to ask these men who made them lords and teachers over us, and where each of them has found that garment of Elijah, in which they so fondly walk upon the earth. They have so long held this language; it has been so long heard in silence, that the silence of inactivity has been mistaken for the silence of guilt: it is time that the young, upon whose unpractised minds they are always at work, should know, that moderation is not wholly indefensible; and it is time they should be taught to exact of religious presumption, proofs as severe as its pretensions are high.

Not that it is meant by these remarks to insinuate that the church is endangered by this denomination of Christians; I hope and believe that its roots are too deep, its structure too admirable, its defenders too able, and its followers too firm, to be shaken by this or any other species of attack; but if such dangers do exist, which I am not able to perceive, that danger is not from principles well known and previously refuted; it is not from men who profess to reason about their faith, and who give you some means of making to them a reply; but it is from that fanaticism which professes only to feel and not to reason, which is intangible and invisible to its enemies, which it is no more possible to meet with the common efforts of reason, than it is to dispute with a burning fever, or to argue down a subtle contagion.

There exists, too, in this sect, not only the arrogance of which I am speaking, but that unchristian charity in the judgment of the motives of others, which is the natural consequence of such arrogance; they are perpetually in the habit of putting on the actions of the rest of mankind, a construction which depreciates all other religions, and exalts their own; like all small sects, living and acting together, their proselytes inflame each other by mutual praise, into an exaggerated sense of their own value; and glide imperceptibly into a kind of confused notion, that they are a chosen and consecrated people, placed by God in the bosom of idolatry, to purify and to save mankind. It is impossible not to perceive that such are the secret feelings by which these men are influenced, and perceiving it, it is not possible at the same time to admit, that they hold the Christian faith in all that vigour, purity,

and vitality which they would make us ordinary Christians to believe.

Another mischief which they do to the cause of religion is, that by their eager and overheated imaginations, they bring discredit upon the sacred cause, and upon the name of religion; they are taunted as the priests of Baal were taunted;—"cry aloud, for he is a God: either he is talking or pursuing, or he is in a journey, or, peradventure he sleepeth, and must be waked: and they cried aloud and cut themselves after their barbarous manner, with knives and lancets, till the blood gushed out upon them." Nothing can be more mistaken in fact, than to look upon the frantic extravagance, or the undignified trifling of their teachers as innocent. Nothing is innocent which casts the faintest shade of error, or of folly upon true religion. Nothing is innocent which disposes the minds of men to confound a serious Christian with an enthusiastic Christian. Nothing is innocent which induces them to dishonour alike the firmness of rational conviction, and the vehemence of ignorant passion; nothing which, by disgusting correct judgments, runs the remotest risk of involving sober Christianity in the fate of low fanaticism.—He who is reproached for being in one extreme, comforts himself that he is not in the other; if he neglects the duties of religion, if he is absorbed by the world, if he violates the clearest rules of right and wrong, he pleads that he is no hypocrite, no fanatic, that he despises the senseless, barbarous raving, which passes so often under the name of religion. And this is perhaps the greatest evil of enthusiasm; it is not that an enthusiast may not himself be a better man, but that he makes others worse men; for the publican says in his turn, thank God I am not as this Pharisee, and then goes headlong into every sin because he will avoid extravagance, hypocrisy and ostentation. Thus it is that human vices and errors are perpetually acting upon each other, that we seize hold of what others do too much, in order to justify ourselves in doing too little, and are, on the opposite side, provoked to do too much, because we observe others to do nothing at all; the horrors of infidelity produce the follies of enthusiasm; and the follies of enthusiasm disgust men into the horrors of infidelity.

If power and praise are the objects you seek under the name of religion, or, if you are mistaken enough to suppose that which is good in some degree is good in every degree;

that the holy apostle, Saint Paul, when he talked of a righteousness over much, and of a zeal without knowledge, talked of those feelings which did not, and which could not exist, then do as these men do, make a new god after your own heated mind, and carry the narrow spirit of a faction into the great business of eternity. But if you really wish to excel all other Christians in your faith, and to exercise most worthily that religion which hallows and guides the world, aim at that moderation which, while it is the most difficult is the most unhonoured, the most unnoticed and the most unrewarded of all human virtues; do that which a Christian ought to do, without proclaiming that you do it; do not insult men to imitate you by the loftiness of your pretensions, but allure them to follow you by the sweetness and beauty of your life. When you come to pray to God before the world, let a venerable and sacred decorum preside over every look, every word and every action; beware, lest you cast upon the name of religion the shadow of blame or reproach;—give us that piety which, while it excites feeling, commands respect; and then we will bear you record, that you have a zeal for God, and that your zeal is according to knowledge.

Zeal without knowledge is the most dangerous foundation on which religious education can be built up; for, where it happens to be applied to a naturally strong understanding, that can detect, in after-life, the excesses into which it has been hurried in early youth, it too often superinduces a perfect carelessness to all religion; a revengeful levity, which seems to atone to itself by indiscriminate scorn, for the follies into which it has been betrayed by indiscriminate enthusiasm.

But bad as this is, it is not the worst evil which is to be laid to the charge of enthusiasm; the total destruction of human reason, the quenching of every faculty, the blotting out of all mind, fatuity, folly, idiotism, are the evils which it too often carries in its train. This is the spectacle at which they should tremble who believe that religious feelings do not require the control of reason, and the aid of sound instruction; the spectacle of a mind dead forever to all joy, without peace or rest in the day or in the night, the victim of incurable, hopeless madness. These are the proper warnings for those who are tired with the moderation of the English Church, who ask for something less calm, more vehement, and more stimulating than they can meet with here. At this moment, a thousand human creatures are chained to the earth, suffer-

ing, in imagination, all the torments of hell, and groaning under the fancied vengeance of an angry God. What has broken them down, and what is the cause of their great ruin? zeal without knowledge; the violence of worship; passions let loose upon the most exalted of all objects; utter contempt of all moderation; hatred and suspicion of the moderate; a dereliction of old, safe, and established worship; a thirst for novelty and noise; a childish admiration of every bold and loquacious pretender; Methodism in every branch of its folly, and in the fullest measure of its arrogance.

Perhaps this sect is come too late; perhaps, in spite of their incessant activity, it is not possible that mankind should again fall very extensively under the dominion of enthusiasm; in the mean time, whatever be their ultimate and general success, this will be the character of their immediate proselytes; they will have all who are broken down by the miseries of the world, and who will fly to the drunkenness of enthusiasm, as a cure for the pangs of sorrow; they will have all men, in whose mind fear predominates over hope; profligates, who have exhausted the pleasures of life, will begin to blame those pleasures enthusiastically, and to atone, by the corruption of their reason, for the corruption of their hearts. Designing hypocrites will sometimes join them, and throw a mask of sanctity over the sordid impurities of their lives. It will be a general receptacle for imbecility, fear, worn-out debauchery, and designing fraud. It will nourish a scorn for religion, produce a constant succession of scoffers, and so blend the excesses of the human mind, upon religious subjects, with its sound and serious efforts, that men, not caring to disentangle the evil from the good, will cast both the evil and the good away, and live in habitual carelessness for their salvation.

But it is urged, in answer to this, that the lives of these men are good. Admit them to be so; are there no good men who are not enthusiasts? Are there no men, deeply impressed with the truth of the Gospel, who avoid all singularity, party spirit, and display, in their obedience to that Gospel? Is there no such a thing as earnest, yet tranquil piety? Is a sound understanding really so incompatible with a pure heart, that men must become spectacles and laughing stocks in this world, before they consider themselves as fit for another, and a better? "I respect these people," says one of the greatest

ornaments of the English Church, (now no more.*) "I respect them, because I believe they are sincere, but I have never been present at their worship, without saying to myself, how different is this from the primitive purity and simplicity of the Gospel."

It is possible to love a thing so ardently, and to covet it so much, that we cease to be good judges of the means by which it is to be attained, or preserved when it is attained. We have in our church, and in theirs, one common object—*salvation*,—the greatest that the mind can conceive, or the passions covet. We will not believe, that an All-wise and an Almighty being has made our eternal happiness to depend upon the display of impetuous feeling, or the observance of unmeaning trifles. We will bend our whole heart to the Lord our God, and to the great author of our redemption; but we will do it with calm adoration, and with zeal according to knowledge; those habits may not impose, they may not dazzle, they may not attract;—but they are practical, they are permanent, they will endure; and, while a thousand new sects are swelling into importance, from their extravagance, and dissolving again, when that extravagance has lost the charm of novelty, our ancient and venerable church, too great, too wise, and too aged, for these popular arts, shall stand the test of time, and gradually gather into her bosom, those who can be wise as well as good; who have an ardent zeal for God, but a zeal according to knowledge.

* Dr. Paley, whose works have adorned, and whose low situation in the English Church has disgraced the age in which he lived.

SERMON XVIII.

ON RICHES.

It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God.—MARK x. VERSE 25.

WITHOUT entering into the disputes to which this passage has given birth, or agitating the question of the propriety of the translation, I shall construe it in a figurative sense, and suppose it to mean, that it is *difficult* for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God; that the temptations, consequent upon great possessions, create a very serious obstacle to the attainment of the principles and of the rewards of the Gospel.

To examine what those obstacles are, and to point out in what manner they may be guarded against, will, I hope, not prove an unprofitable subject for this day's discourse; if, in the progress of such discourse, I point out any pernicious effects of wealth upon the moral and religious character, I cannot, of course, mean to insinuate that such influence is never counteracted, and such danger never repelled.—I am speaking, not of fact, but of tendency,—not of those effects which *always* are produced, but of those which in nature and probability may be produced.

It is difficult for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God:—The first cause to be alleged for this difficulty is, that he wants that important test of his own conduct, which is to be gained from the conduct of his fellow-creatures towards him; he may be going far from the kingdom of God, on the feet of pride, and over the spoils of injustice, without learning, from the averted looks, and the alienated hearts of men, that his ways are the ways of death. Wealth is apt to inspire a kind of awe, which fashions every look, modulates every

word, and influences every action;—and this, not so much from any view to interest, as from that imposing superiority, exercised upon the imagination by prosperous fortune, from which it is extremely difficult for any man to emancipate himself, who has not steadily accustomed his judgment to measure his fellow-creatures by real, rather than artificial distinctions, and to appeal from the capricious judgments of the world to his own reflections, and to the clear and indisputable precepts of the Gospel.

The general presumption, indeed, which we are apt to form, is, that the mischief is already done, that the rich man has been accustomed to such flattering reception, such gracious falsehoods, and such ingenious deceit; that to treat him justly, is to treat him harshly; and, to defer to him only in the proportion of his merit, is a violation of established forms. No man feels it to be his duty to combat with the gigantic errors of the world, and to exalt himself into a champion of righteousness; he leaves the state of society just as he found it, and indolently contributes his quota of deceit, to make the life of a human being an huge falsehood from the cradle to the tomb. It is this which speaks to Dives the false history of his shameless and pampered life;—here it is, in the deceitful mirror of the human face, that he sees the high gifts with which God has endowed him;—and here it is, in that mirror, so dreadfully just to guilty poverty, he may come back, after he has trampled on every principle of honour and justice, and see joy, and delight, and unbounded hospitality, and unnumbered friends. Therefore, I say to you, when you enter in among your fellows, in the pomp, and plenitude of wealth,—when the meek eye of poverty falls before you,—when all men listen to your speech, and the approving smile is ready to break forth on every brow,—then keep down your rising heart, and humble yourself before your father who seeth in secret; then fear very greatly for your salvation; then tremble more than Felix trembled; then remember that it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven.

The second reason why it is so difficult for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God is, that he loves the kingdom of the world too well. Death is very terrible, says the son of Sirach, to him who lives at ease in his possessions; and in truth the pleasure of life does, in a great measure, depend upon the lot which

we draw, and the heritage which we enjoy; it may be urged, that a person who knows no other situation, wishes no other; and that the boundary of his experience is the boundary of his desire. This would be true enough if we did not derive our notions of happiness and misery from a wider range of observation than our own destiny can afford; I will not speak of great misfortunes, for such instances prove but too clearly, how much the love of life depends on the enjoyment it affords; —but a man who is the eternal prey of solicitude, wishes for the closing of the scene; a constant, cheerless struggle with little miseries, will dim the sun, and wither the green herb, and taint the fresh wind;—he will cry out, let me depart,—he will count his gray hairs with joy, and one day will seem unto him as many. Those who are not reminded of the wretchedness of human existence by such reflections as these, who are born to luxury and respect, and sheltered from the various perils of poverty, begin to forget the precarious tenure of worldly enjoyments, and to build sumptuously on the sand; they put their trust (as the Psalmist says), in chariots and horses, and dream they shall live for ever in those palaces which are but the out-houses of the grave. There are very few men, in fact, who are capable of withstanding the constant effect of artificial distinctions; it is difficult to live upon a throne, and to think of a tomb; it is difficult to be clothed in splendour, and to remember we are dust; it is difficult for the rich and the prosperous to keep their hearts as a burning coal upon the altar, and to humble themselves before God as they rise before men. In the meantime, while pride gathers in the heart, the angel is ever writing in the book, and wrath is ever mantling in the cup; complain not in the season of woe, that you are parched with thirst; ask not for water, as Dives asked you have a warning which he never had. There stand the ever memorable words of the text, which break down the stateliness of man, and dissipate the pageantry of the earth:—thus it is that the few words of a God can make the purple of the world appear less beautiful than the mean garments of a beggar, and striking terror into the hearts of rulers and of exarchs, turn the banners of dominion to the ensigns of death, and make them shudder at the sceptre which they wield. To-day, you are clothed in fine linen, and fare sumptuously; in a few, and evil years, they shall hew you out a tomb of marble, whiter than snow, and the cunning artifice of the workman shall

grave on it weeping angels, and make a delicate image of one fleeing up to heaven, as if it were thee, and shall relate in golden letters, the long story of your honours and your birth,—thou fool!! He that dieth by the road side for the lack of a morsel of bread, God loveth him as well as he loveth thee; and at the gates of heaven, and from the blessed angels thou shalt learn, that it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven.

Another fatal effect of great wealth is, that it is apt to harden the heart; wealth gives power; power produces immediate gratification; the long habit of immediate gratification, an impatience of unpleasant feelings; a claim to be exempted from the contemplation of human misery, of everything calculated to inspire gloom, to pollute enjoyment, and protrude a sense of painful duties; the compassion with which prosperous men are born in common with us all, is never cherished by a participation in the common suffering, a share in the general struggle; it wants that sense of the difficulty and wretchedness of existence, by which we obtain the best measure of the sufferings of our fellow-creatures. We talk of human life as a journey, but how variously is that journey performed? there are some who come forth girt, and shod, and mantled, to walk on velvet lawns, and smooth terraces, where every gale is arrested, and every beam is tempered; there are others who walk on the alpine paths of life, against driving misery, and through stormy sorrows; and over sharp afflictions, walk with bare feet and naked breast, jaded, mangled, and chilled. It is easy enough to talk of misfortunes; that they exist, no man can be ignorant; it is not the bare knowledge of them that is wanting, but that pungent, vital commiseration, under the influence of which a man springs up from the comforts of his home, deserts his favourite occupations, toils, invents, investigates, struggles, wades through perplexity, disappointment, and disgust, to save a human being from shame, poverty and destruction: here then is the jet, and object of our blessed Saviour's menace; and reasonable enough it is that he who practically withdraws himself from the great Christian community of benevolence, should be cut off from the blessings of Christian reward. If we suffer ourselves to be so infatuated by the enjoyments of this world, as to forget the imperious claims of affliction, and to render our minds, from the long habit of selfish gratification,

incapable of fulfilling the duties we owe to mankind, then let us not repine, that our lot ceases in this world, or that the rich man shall never inherit immortal life.

As to that confidence and pride of which riches are too often the source, what can the constitution of that mind be, which has formed these notions of divine wisdom and justice? Was this inequality of possessions contrived for the more solid establishment of human happiness, that there might be gradation and subordination among men? or was it instituted to give an arbitrary and useless superiority of one human being over another? Are any duties exacted for the good conferred? or was a rich man only born to sleep quietly, to fare sumptuously, and to be clothed in brave apparel? Has he, who does not create a particle of dust but it has its use, has he, do you imagine, formed one human being merely as a receptacle of choice fruits and delicate viands; and has he stationed a thousand others about him, of the same flesh and blood, that they might pick up the crumbs of his table, and gratify the wishes of his heart? No man is mad enough to acknowledge such an opinion; but many enjoy wealth as if they had no other notion respecting it than that they were to extract from it the greatest enjoyment possible, to eat and drink to-day, and to mock at the threatened death of to-morrow.

The command of our Saviour to the rich man, was, go thy way quickly, sell all thou hast, divide it among the poor, and take up thy cross and follow me; but this precept of our blessed Lord's, as it was intended only for the interests of the Gospel, and the state of the world at that period, cannot be considered as applicable to the present condition of mankind; to preach such exalted doctrine in these latter days, would, I am afraid, at best be useless; our object is to seek for some fair medium between selfishness and enthusiasm. If something of great possessions be dedicated to inspire respect, and preserve the gradations of society, a part to the real wants, a little to the ornaments and superfluities of life, a little even to the infirmities of the possessor, how much will remain for the unhappy, who ask only a preference over vicious pleasure, disgraceful excess, and idle ostentation.

Neither is it to objects only of individual misery, that the application of wealth is to be confined; whatever has for its object to enlarge human knowledge, or to propagate moral and religious principle; whatever may affect immediately, or remotely, directly, or indirectly, the public happiness,

may add to the comforts, repress the crimes, or animate the virtues of social life; to every sacred claim of this nature, the appetite for frivolous pleasure, and the passion for frivolous display, must implicitly yield: if the minutiæ of individual charity present an object too inconsiderable for a capacious mind, there are vast asylums for sickness and want, which invite your aid; breathe among their sad inhabitants the spirit of consolation and order, give to them wiser arrangements and wider limits, prepare shelter for unborn wretchedness, and medicine for future disease; give opportunity to talents, and scope to goodness; go among the multitude, and see if you can drag from the oblivious heap some child of God, some gift of heaven, whose mind can burst through the secrets of nature, and influence the destiny of man. This is the dignified and religious use of riches, which, when they cherish boyish pride, to minister to selfish pleasure, shall verily doom their possessor to the flames of hell.—But he who knows wherefore God has given him great possessions, he shall die the death of Lazarus, without leading his life, and rest in the bosom of Abraham, though he never stretched forth his wounds to the dogs, nor gathered up the crumbs of the table for his food.

The best mode of guarding against that indirect flattery, which is always paid to wealth, is to impress the mind with a thorough belief of the fact; and to guard by increased inward humility against the danger of corruption from without. The wealthy man who attributes to himself great or good qualities, from what he conceives to be the opinion of the world, exposes himself to dangerous errors; on the most important of all subjects, this source of self-judgment is for him most effectually poisoned; he must receive such evidence with the utmost distrust, weigh every circumstance with caution, court animadversion and friendly candour, and cherish the man by whose polished justice his feelings are consulted, while his follies are repressed.

For the pride which is contracted by the contemplation of little things, there is no better cure than the contemplation of great things. Let a rich man turn from his own pompous littleness, and think of heaven, of eternity, and of salvation; let him think of all the nations that lie dead in the dust, waiting for the trumpet of God; he will smile at his own brief authority, and be as one lifted up to an high eminence, to whom the gorgeous palaces of the world are the specks and atoms

of the eye; the great laws of nature pursue their eternal course, and heed not the frail distinctions of this life; the fever spares not the rich and the great; the tempest does not pass by them; they are racked by pain, they are weakened by disease, they are broken by old age, they are agonized in death like other men, they moulder in the tomb, they differ only from other men in this, that God will call them to a more severe account, that they must come before him with deeds of Christian charity and acts of righteousness, equal to all the opportunities and blessings which they have enjoyed.

Let the rich man then remember in the midst of his enjoyments, by what slight tenure those enjoyments are held. In addition to the common doubt which hangs over the life of all men, fresh perils lay hid in his pleasures, and the very object for which he lives may be the first to terminate his existence. "Remember thou art mortal," was said every day to a great king. So, after the same fashion I would that a man of great possessions should frequently remember the end of all things, and the long home, and the sleeping place of a span in breadth; I would have him go from under the gilded dome down to the place where they will gather him to the bones of his fathers; he should tread in the dust of the noble, and trample on the ashes of the proud; I would heap before him sights of woe and images of death and terror; I would break down his stateliness and humble him before his Redeemer and his judge. My voice should ever sound in his ears, that it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven.

SERMON XIX.

ON SWEARING.

Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain, for the Lord will not hold him guiltless who taketh his name in vain.—Exodus xx. verse 7.

While we are guarded against great and daring crimes, by the disgust which their enormity excites, we remain exposed to the lesser vices, because we consider them as too unimportant for our care, and in this manner they gain a victory by our negligence, which they never could obtain from their own power.

Indeed, against the greater crimes Almighty God has placed a powerful safeguard in the admonitions of conscience which they awaken; but when we come from crimes against feeling, to crimes against reason, the danger is greater because the warning is less; and here we must owe to the instruction of others, and to self-examination, that innocence which we derive, on other occasions, from the loud and irresistible cries of nature.

Thou shalt not take the Lord's name in vain. To use the Lord's name in vain, is to use it on any occasion, except when called upon by the laws of our country, to offer that solemn pledge for the truth of what we say. But the misfortune is, we do not deem it in vain, if the object on which we employ it is of importance to *us*, and to us *alone*. We do not think it in vain to call down God, armed with all his terrors, upon any accident which disturbs the cheerfulness of our lives; we think that obedient Heaven is always ready to avenge our wrongs, and that the Deity is ever watchful to bless those whom we bless and curse those whom we curse. We make use of God's name to exasperate the violence of

our own foolish passions, and to sharpen the edge of those trifling vexations, which are entailed upon us all, in our passage through the world.

It may not, perhaps, be quite clear where the great danger of using the name of God upon common occasions can be: the danger (and a very serious one it is) is this, that we familiarize ourselves too much with that awful name;—that the humble reverence, with which it should always be thought of and pronounced, be exchanged for confidence and boldness;—that, having broken through the pales of the altar, we approach to the sanctuary itself;—that, having accustomed ourselves to talk of God without fear, we break through his laws without hesitation; and end with bad actions after we have begun with impious words.

These outworks and fences of religion are of the most sacred importance;—no man breaks out at once into great vices; no man is of a sudden notoriously wicked; but he begins with little faults,—he abstains from public worship,—he loses gradually the awful remembrance of his Creator,—he accustoms himself to call upon his name on the most trifling occasions; and then after such beginnings, foolishly imagines he can stop just where he pleases. He who breaks through the outward wall will soon come into the inner dwelling; this law is one of the strong barriers of true piety;—beware how you break it down;—think much before you pronounce the name of God;—and you will think much more before you disobey his word.—Hallow that name with an holy fear, and you will not trample on the laws which that holy name sanctions. Let all your words be yea and nay; and that will be some security that your actions are pure and irreproachable as your language.

The only excuse which worldly-minded men can set up for sin is pleasure; the present temptation is too strong; the sense of future evil too faint and too remote; but who will assert, that there is any pleasure in an oath?—Or that in the whole extent of language, the only words capable of communicating satisfaction, are those which are not only coarse and vulgar, but shocking: not only shocking, but irreligious, blasphemous, and bad. To take the Lord's name in vain, is to incur guilt without delight; and to violate a solemn commandment of God, merely that every one who hears us may conceive a low opinion of our manners, our education, and our understanding.

It is with small vices as with trifling complaints of the body; they become dangerous, only because they are neglected. From the age of innocence, when we look at the extremes of human depravity, the distance appears immense; we say, there is a great gulf between us;—my soul can never be darkened with such crimes as these; I shall go down to my grave in innocence and peace.—In the mean time, the descent from one step to another is short, and gentle, and we arrive at the distant goal, betrayed by the artful transition. We should take up the task of amendment, where it is most likely to be attended with success; to struggle with great vices is always difficult, sometimes, I am afraid, hopeless; in checking the vice of swearing, we are destroying the seeds of unrighteousness, and cherishing that feeling of sanctity which is the parent of every good; hereafter, when our religious feelings are blunted and worn away, when our minds are prepared for the reception of every vice, we shall find it too late to keep holy the name of the Lord our God;—too late to remember, that they are not guiltless who take his name in vain.

Whatever rules any man may choose to apply to himself, he will not deny, that it is his duty to watch, with the most pious care, the first appearances of this dangerous vice in the minds of children; that a young person at least, should be taught never to pronounce the name of God, but with feelings of pious gratitude, and unbounded veneration; never, without remembering that God breathed into him the breath of life; that, at his will, that breath still hangs in his nostrils; that in a moment, his soul may be taken from him; and that he may be called before the throne of that being, whose power nothing can resist; and from whose wisdom nothing remains concealed. The youth who has these feelings, is safe from all flagrant and enormous crimes; in the moment of temptation, he flies to them as to the horns of the altar; and, in the day of his adversity, they are his stony rock, his buckler, and his shield.

It is very striking, in our perusal of the Scriptures, to remark the awful manner in which the name of God is mentioned; and the noble images and allusions with which it is surrounded and hallowed: Moses says, that it is eternal, everlasting, not to be changed. Solomon calls it the frontlet to his eyes; Isaiah says it is the tower of his heart.—Zechariah calls it a wall of fire.—Joel, and Amos, and Haggai, say

it is a miracle, and a glory, and a burning light. Prophets, lawgivers, and sacred kings bless it; the worst only, and the lowest of men, revile it, and trample it in the dust. This is the way that common minds speak of the first and great cause of all; but David says, that when he called upon God, the earth shook, and trembled; that the very foundations of the hills were shaken. "He bowed the Heavens, and came down; darkness was under his feet; he rode upon a cherubin;—he did fly upon the wings of the wind; he made darkness his secret place; his pavilion round about him was dark waters, and thick clouds of the skies. The Lord also thundered in the Heavens, and the highest gave his voice. Then the channels of waters were seen, and the foundations of the world were discovered. At thy rebuke, oh God; at the blast of the breath of thy nostrils."—This is not mere imagination, but wise and instructive piety; the loftiest flight, and the boldest epithet have their use; whatever exalts the Deity, enforces obedience to his laws; whatever degrades his name, renders it more probable, that his commandments will not be observed.

It is a vast advantage to keep in the heart a pure image to look at,—something which is free from every stain of mortal frailty; and which we may follow, though at a distance immeasurable, and imitate, though in dimness and obscurity; for this reason, the thought of God is to be fenced about with every care; it is *not* to be called forth for the purposes of any evil passion, or to gratify rash intemperance, or to give dignity to insignificance. It is to be reserved for stupendous affliction, poured forth in eminent distress, appealed to before grave tribunals, and pronounced with solemn devotion, when the dearest interests of mankind are at stake. God has given us his name as a support to human laws, as a security to human happiness; it is so great and serious a possession, the use of it is of such vast importance, that the law takes it to itself, and pronounces it to be an offence against the public to use it, but in prayer. And the law does this very justly, reasoning after this manner; that by the use of God's name contracts are ratified; by that pledge, men bind themselves to the performance of high duties; recompense is awarded; and crimes are punished. From a confidence that the name of God will not be taken in vain; so to *take it*, is to weaken one of the props on which human happiness is placed; is to accustom yourself and others to the irreverent use of that

name, upon the reverent use of which the administration of justice intimately depends. It is in this very manner that our Saviour preaches it, not only forbidding perjury, but forbidding that habit of appealing carelessly to sacred things, which lays the foundation for a breach of oaths. "Ye have heard how it hath been said by them of old time, thou shalt not forswear thyself;—but I say unto you, swear not at all, neither by Heaven, for it is God's throne, nor by the earth, for it is his footstool, nor by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great king; but let your communication be yea, and nay, for whatsoever is more than these, cometh of evil."

It is pleasant to remember, that no man can cultivate any one virtue, without cultivating others at the same time; now, to watch carefully over the use we make of the name of God, and to beware that we do not misuse it, even in the strongest paroxysm of violence, induces a turn of mind, which is extremely favourable to the government of our evil nature; for it is not probable that he, who is striving not to offend against one commandment of God, should at that very moment offend against another; the same awful feeling which prevents him from blaspheming against the name of God, may curb anger, soften hatred, and produce a general spirit of pious moderation. To conclude; which of all those crimes prescribed in the decalogue is the greatest, we know not; as they are all equally forbidden, they are, probably, all equally heinous:—there cannot, therefore, be a doubt, which, in a religious point of view, it is the greatest folly to commit; for, to the violation of the name of God, there is no natural impulse, nor is any great enjoyment the consequence of it; for though it may be difficult sometimes not to do it, there is no sort of pleasure in doing it, nor is it a vice by which anything is gained, but the disreputation and disgrace. In the meantime, it is as dangerous in its consequences as if it were agreeable in itself; it weakens the obligation of oaths, destroys the delicacy of religious feeling, and makes all those thoughts common, which should be reserved for the great changes and chances of life. He, therefore, who blasphemes out of these walls, will pray within them to little purpose; and, whatever be the effusions of his heart, when the world are not by, his open profanations will not be forgotten, nor will God hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain.

SERMON XX.

ON MEEKNESS.

The ornament of a meek and quiet spirit is in the sight of God of a great price.—First Epistle of Peter iii. verse 4.

The meekness of the Gospel has been so far mistaken by one sect of Christians, that they have erroneously interpreted it to mean passive submission to violence and injury; a principle which operates as an incitement to many bad passions, by leaving to them their undisputed reward, and urges us to abandon those salutary means of defence, implanted by nature for the encouragement of justice, and the due order of the world.

That all men should cease to resist, would be of very little importance unless all men were to cease to attack; for, otherwise, such a system would be merely the extinction of all rights, and the quiet toleration of every wrong. On the contrary, if the object be to diminish, as much as possible, the quantity of evil in the universe, and if its sudden destruction be impossible, it is much better to render vice and violence unsuccessful in their object, by that calm yet vigilant resistance which is more desirous of preventing future than revenging past aggression.

As I cannot, for these reasons believe, that the meekness of the Gospel is pusillanimity, I cannot allow it any more to be error; it cannot consist in an undue depreciation of ourselves, or an ignorance of any one superiority we may chance to possess over our fellow-creatures; the Gospel never teaches ignorance; it stimulates man to the study of himself as the best of all wisdom; it permits him to discover the rank which God has assigned to him; but threatens him with omnipotent anger, if he turns the gifts of the Creator to the scorn and

oppression of the creature, and when he feels the pride of talents or of power; the Scriptures unveil to him the glory of God, and tell him of the days of the life of man, that they are few and evil; and that when the breath of his nostrils is gone, he returneth again to his dust.

Christian meekness is neither ignorance nor pusillanimity; but the meekness of the Gospel, so far as it is concerned in the vindication of its own rights, vindicates them only when they are of considerable importance. Nothing more distant from the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit than the incessant and scrupulous vindication of minute rights, and an avidity for litigation and contest; a meek man will cede much, and before he vindicates a right, or resents an injury, will consider if that for which he contends is worth the price of peace, not only if it be an object for which justice will permit him to struggle, but one which prudence forbids him to relinquish; he will pass over many trifling wrongs, forgive slight injuries as the natural and inevitable consequences of the imperfect morality of man; he will subdue malice by openness and benignity; turn away wrath by soft answers; disarm hostility by patience; and endure much for the Gospel, that he may gain the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which, in the sight of God, is of a great price.

Evangelical meekness is never more exemplified than in the proper management of superior talents, so as to make them rather a source of pleasure and encouragement than of apprehension to those with whom we live. The same observation applies equally to superior rank, superior birth, and every species of artificial as well as natural distinction; meekness softens down the distance between man and man, sweetens the malevolent passions which it is apt to excite, and is so far from diminishing subordination, that it strengthens it by converting a duty into a pleasure. For mankind are at the bottom, perhaps well aware that they must be governed, and the obedience of men may be raised into a species of idolatry, when those who could command them court them; and when they find the garb of power laid aside on purpose to give pleasure, and diffuse the cheerfulness and confidence of equality. The true meekness of the Gospel, therefore, is powerfully evinced in the suppression of any superiority that may be painful and oppressive, by informing rather than exposing the ignorant; by raising up the humble and judiciously bringing forward to notice those whose merits are obscured

by their apprehensions; Christianity is not confined to churches and to hospitals; to houses of mourning or of prayer; but it penetrates every situation, and it decorates every relation of life; the ornament of a meek and a quiet spirit may be worn amidst worldly joys without diminishing them. We may be near to God, when we seem the most distant from him, and offer up a sacrifice of meekness that shall be as pleasant as a prayer in the temple.

It is not only unchristian, but it is unworthy and little to thrust forward every pretension to notice;—to blazen ourselves over with the arms and insignia of our merits, and to be perpetually occupied with putting the rest of the world in mind of their inferiority;—greatness is, then, infinitely attractive, when it seems unconscious of itself; when it is detected by others; not when it publishes and praises its own importance;—when it is called forth by the chances of the world to eminence and light; and is unconscious of the wonder amid the praises and acclamations of mankind.

A meek man does not exact minute and constant attentions from his fellow-creatures; he is not apt to form an exaggerated estimate of the duties which are owing to him;—he is grateful for little services, and affectionate for any slight mark of notice and respect;—he attributes every act of benevolence, not to his own merits, but to yours;—he is thankful for what has been conferred, without being incensed that more has been withheld. To give to the meek is to lend to that Saviour whom they imitate; is to confer favours upon a man who is ever ready to repay them seven fold, because his memory of them is tenacious and his gratitude lively: his spirit burns with a consuming fire, till he can make the soul of his benefactor leap with joy.

On the contrary, the most obliging disposition cannot keep pace with the pretensions of a proud man. The most arduous efforts to promote his interests, he considers as so many duties owing to his merits; no sacrifice is too humble, no concession too flattering, no negligence venial, no momentary remission of benevolent exertion to be endured;—whatever you confer you lose, for whatever you are deficient you suffer; it is a service abundant in punishment, and utterly barren of reward.

If a meek man hides his own superiority, he is ever ready to do justice to the pretensions of others; the weak, the absent and the defenceless feel safe in his judgments; they are

sure not to be tortured by asperity of speech, malignantly calumniated or sacrificed to unprincipled ridicule;—their virtues and excellent qualities he is ever ready to acknowledge, because he has no motive to suppress them,—his justice gives us ease, his innocence security,—we repose on such a Christian character,—it is the shadow of a large rock in a weary land; we cast ourselves under it for refreshment, and peace, weary with the dust, and the heat, and the panting of life.

As man advances in civilization, the feelings of his mind become so vulnerable and acute, that severity of invective, the mere power of inculpative words becomes more intolerable than bodily pain, or any evil that fortune can impose. The intemperate expressions of anger inflict wounds which are never healed for a life, and lay the foundation of animosities which no subsequent conciliation can ever appease. The tongue of a meek Christian is held with a bridle;—his words are yea and nay, righteous, temperate, beautiful and calm;—remonstrance without bitterness,—firmness without passion,—pardon without reproach;—he has not to lament that disgraceful and unchristian violence of speech which often excites as much remorse in those who indulge it, as indignation in those against whom it is directed, a virulence often used with as much freedom as if men were proper and candid judges of their own injuries, and with as much force as if every slight injury against ourselves canceled all the rights of humanity towards its author, and marked him out as the fit victim of impure and unbridled invective.

The meek disciple of him who was the meekest of all, is strongly impressed with the vanity and unworthiness of everything human; in whatever station he may place himself, relative to his fellow-creatures, he cannot deduce materials for pride, for he deems that the highest are low, and the strongest frail, and the earth an idle dream; while vulgar pride attaches the highest degree of importance to everything, however distantly and minutely related to itself; meekness, in viewing itself, and the earth upon which it is placed, trembles at the attributes, and the works of God, and wonders that it should be remembered amidst the labyrinth of moving worlds.

It subdues high-mindedness by reflecting on the ignorance with which human schemes are planned,—the casualties by which they are interrupted, the unexpected consequences by

which they are followed,—and the shortness of life by which they are frustrated, dissipated, and mocked. This view of the insignificance of life, intended for the cure of pride, may, by abuse and misapplication, encourage levity and inactivity; we are not to be careless in the government of ourselves, and in the adjustment of our conduct, because this world, contrasted with the sum of things, is insignificant; and to pass through life in boisterous merriment, or supine indifference, because life is short;—this world, so insignificant, is the world in which we are destined to act, this life so short, is all that is granted us for probation; its narrow limits, its feeble powers, and its sad vicissitudes, cannot justify sloth or despair, though they ought to subdue pride, and to promote that ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is so congenial to the Gospel, and so well adapted to the condition of man.

The absence of this meekness produces a false estimation of life, and gives birth to many follies and some vices; a proud man is, in his own eyes, the best and greatest work of God; the most trivial circumstance which relates to himself, is of more importance than the happiness or misery of a province; as often as he condescends to mention them, he exacts the most lively and watchful sympathy to the minutest of his pleasures and his pains: as he is everything to himself, he expects he should be everything to you; he not only confines his thoughts to this world, but to that particular atom of it which he is; whether this atom be hot, or cold, or moist, or dry, or joyful, or sad; these are the principles which, in his estimation, should diffuse joy or sadness over the creation, and regulate the sum of things.

Placability is a common attribute of the character described in my text: whoever thinks humbly of himself, will not be prone to conceive the injuries he experiences, as too atrocious for pardon, too enormous to be washed away with tears, or atoned for by contrition; perhaps he who has suffered the injury, has in some measure caused it; perhaps, under similar circumstances, he might have inflicted it; he has done as much before to others; he may do as much again; his transgressions against God are innumerable; he is placed, for a few years, among frail beings, of a mixed and fluctuating nature, himself as frail as they; why judge as he would fear to be judged? why make a life of suffering a life of wrath? why exhibit the spectacle of remorseless insignificance?

these are the considerations which dispose a quiet and humble mind to the forgiveness of injuries, and increasing benevolence in the world, promote the mild and merciful purposes of the Gospel.

The last characteristic of meekness, which I shall specify, is long suffering,—patience for the weaknesses and transgressions of others as far as wisdom will permit; something opposed to irascibility and quickness of resentment. And this is not mere facility of temper which prefers any endurance, however great, to any opposition however slight; but a conviction that forbearance often does more than violence; that men are never more grateful than when they come afterwards to discover that their errors and offences have been borne with affectionate patience, from the hope of future amendment. It is from meekness alone, that the most complete and lasting penitence is produced; that which proceeds not from the reproaches and the punishments of others, but from the reproaches which he who has offended makes to himself; that which a bad son feels at the speechless grief of his mother; or an ungrateful friend at the silent melancholy of his benefactor; or a false disciple at the sight of his master.—Thus the fugitive apostle, whom anger might have hardened, was subdued by the meekness of Christ,—"and Jesus looked upon him, and straightway Peter went out, and wept bitterly."

Having thus expressed some clear and definite notions of what meekness is, it shall be my care, on some future occasion, to point out the pleasures which result from this ornament of a meek and a quiet spirit, and the expedients which suggest themselves for the subjugation of those passions which are unfriendly to its attainment; for it is ever our duty to promote the fruit of the spirit, which are joy, and peace, and rest; it has pleased God to try us here, with divers diseases, and sundry kinds of death; these we cannot strive with, and when God calls them away, we must part with children, and we must often bear miserable wants and sorrows; but these are enough; let us not pour fresh bitterness into the bitter cup of life:—A little while and we shall be gone hence and be no more seen; till then, peace, forgiveness of injuries and tenderness to the infirmities of man. We may thus catch a few moments from the inclemency of fate, and open in our hearts those springs of love and mercy which will flow on till they are swallowed up by the grave.

SERMON XXI.

ON THE MODE OF PASSING THE SABBATH.

And it came to pass that he went through the corn fields on the Sabbath day, and his disciples began to pluck the ears of corn. And the Pharisees said unto him, behold, why do they, on the Sabbath day, that which is not lawful; and he said unto them, the Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath.—MARK II. VERSES 23, 24, 27.

As the Sabbath day is of divine institution, we are bound to keep it holy; and we should have been equally bound to have done so, if we were unable to discover the reasons for which its sanctification was ordained; but the reasons for the law, and its utility, are so far from doubtful, that it probably would have originated with man, if it had not been commanded by his Creator; and the weary nations would have found a Sabbath for their toils, unhallowed by the structure of the globe, and by the rest of God.

The great importance of the Sabbath, not only for the promotion of righteousness, but even for our mere temporal welfare, is too generally admitted to need much discussion. If the duties of religion were left to be performed by every one, at the time, and after the manner they thought best, there would be a considerable risk that they were not performed at all. The public, and periodical exercise of worship, is the best security for sound doctrine; the teachers of religion teach openly to the world, and artifice, fanaticism, and credulity, which begin always in obscurity, are subjected to the wholesome restraint of public opinion. We are so absorbed, also, in the business, the pleasure, and the vanities, of this world, that the recollection of any other, would, but for the institution of the Sabbath, be very soon obliterated. It is

absolutely necessary that the chain of our ideas should be broken, and a new system of reflections introduced; the cessation of business and amusement, the quiet of the Sabbath, the unusual appearance of objects, the solemnity of manner and deportment, observable on this day, have all some little tendency to rouse the most thoughtless, to awe the most profligate into a sense of duty, and to inspire feelings of contrition and remorse. The remembrance of youthful feelings has ever a strong influence on the minds of men; those who have been brought up, when young, in a pious observance of the Sabbath, to whom religious instruction has been rendered pleasant by sweetness of manner and dexterity of management, can never meet the Sabbath without experiencing, in some small degree, the same interesting feelings; and when they have tried in vain the pleasures of sin, and found (as I firmly believe every man must find,) that happiness is derived only from that righteousness which the Gospel of Christ prescribes, they will return to the Sabbath, and seek from the calm sanctity of that day, the pure enjoyments of their youth.

The importance of the Sabbath admitted, the first question arising from the subject concerns the best method of passing it. The rule our Saviour has given us is one of the greatest importance; the Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath; that is, man was not created for the mere purpose of complying with certain ceremonies, and obeying certain prohibitions; but these ceremonies were instituted, and these prohibitions enacted to produce an effect upon man, to mortify in him all sinfulness of the flesh, to cherish in him the spirit of righteousness, and to meliorate his fallen nature. The Sabbath, in fact, was made for man, not man for the Sabbath. Taking the text in this sense, I shall proceed to observe upon the method of passing the Sabbath.

The common excuse in the minds of those who are so unhappily frivolous that they cannot abstain from unbecoming amusements, even on the Sabbath, is, that if they were not doing what they do do, they should be doing something worse. But this style of reasoning, if it can possibly justify any fault, must justify all except the greatest: things are either good or bad in themselves; a bad thing is not good because others are worse, nor is it any excuse for walking in the paths of sin, that we are only midway, and have not yet reached the extremity; the answer is surely very obvious

to such an excuse; why do you continue in such an ungodly state, that you must either do that which you do not approve, or something else which you approve still less? Why must your progress be from negligence to guilt, and why the very moment that you abstain from levity on the Sabbath must you be charged with crime? the fact may be true, but it is no justification of your contempt for the Sabbath; it is only to say, though we are unwilling to make those sacrifices and exertions necessary to a discharge of our duty, we will not deviate from that duty grossly; we will disobey God in a method as little burthensome to our conscience as possible; but disobey him we must; such is the plain meaning of that style of reasoning which many of us are unfortunate enough to consider as an excuse for the violation of the Sabbath. Amusement on the Sabbath is not vice, perhaps, but untimely amusement leads to ungodliness, by checking seriousness and sanctity of thought, and by breaking down the barriers of propriety. The greater part of those who avail themselves, to any Christian purpose, of the institution of the Sabbath, do not do so, perhaps, from any preconceived resolution; but the quiet solemnity of the day, and the total alteration of the usual appearances, insensibly introduce a new train of ideas, which could never be the case if the same resources of frivolous dissipation were equally accessible at every period. On this day, the pastor, standing between God and the people, and clothed about with doctrines of truth, boldly speaks of faith, and charity, and holy love, and preaches Christ crucified, and the sound of the trumpet, the dead rising from their graves, and the life of the world to come; and when he hears these things, (for on this day alone he does hear them,) the miscreant of this earth trembles, the loftiest guilt gathers paleness, the cross is lifted up on high, and every soul is prostrate at the feet of Christ. It is on this day, perhaps, that the man who has been gathering, and hoarding all his life, begins first to find his confidence in earthly treasures weakened and impaired; on this day, the strong think of death; the youthful of old age; the comely of pale disease; on this day, the son of pleasure starts from his delicious vices, and thinks of a world to come.

Those common amusements, the innocence of which is, by some, so strongly contended for, must have a tendency to destroy completely the virtue and efficacy of the Sabbath; it is in the absence of our usual occupations, and at the season

of leisure, that conscience regains her empire over us, and that man is compelled to hear the reproaches of his own heart; the mind turned inwardly upon itself, beholds the melancholy ravages of passion, the treacherous power of pleasure, and the sad waste of life. Every recurring Sabbath properly spent, is a fresh chance for salvation; if dignity is ever recovered after the feeling of self-degradation has been long endured; if the latter half of life is ever dedicated to the works of godliness and knowledge, when the days of youth have been squandered in impiety and ignorance; if tears of feeling ever flow again from the dry eye; if blushes of shame are ever brought back to the hardened cheek, it is to the awful voice and warning aspect of the Sabbath more than to any other cause, that mankind are indebted for these wholesome and pleasing examples of repentance.

To keep the Sabbath in levity, and with every species of ordinary indulgence, is not to keep it at all; it diminishes the probability of improvement by making us believe that we have dedicated a day to religion which we have dedicated to everything but religion; like all other false piety, it confirms and supports sin by inspiring an unmerited approbation of ourselves, and by soothing the useful severity of inward examination; in this, indeed, and in every other similar case, it may be doubtful whether it were not better to lay aside all pretensions to religion at once than to quiet our conscience by a belief so powerless, that we cannot sacrifice to it, for the least interval of time, the least of all our pleasures. After all I have said, it is but too plain from whence these trifling arguments for trifling away the Sabbath proceed: they proceed, I fear, from that advanced state of wealth and civilization, which precludes so many human beings from the necessity of any mental exertion, and the example of this class of society spreads rapidly downwards, destroying as it descends; they learn early to seek for gratification, which is immediate, and become so weakened by long indulgence that they are incapable of supporting serious thought for a single instant; that vacuity is considered as worse than death, which is not filled up by the exultations of vanity or the perturbations of sense. Such is the deep infatuation, and the melancholy imbecility of a life of fashionable amusement, called by the current error of the world, a life of pleasure; but pitied by the good and wise, as a life of wretchedness, leading to a death of despair.

Having said thus much upon the manner in which the Sabbath ought not to be passed, it will be still more easy to state the few simple rules which that solemn institution calls upon us to fulfil. The first of these is public worship; the great object of every human being should be, his progress in righteousness: and the sanctity of the Sabbath surely affords us the most favourable of all occasions for such a communication with our own hearts. What have I done wrong? In what manner could I have acted more conformably to the spirit of the Gospel? What rules for future conduct can I found upon my failures and my misfortunes? Whence have my joys and my sorrows sprung? Am I advancing in the great science of life? Is my dominion over present enjoyment strengthened? Is my perception of distant good enlivened? Am I the disciple of Christ? Do I strive by a just, gentle, and benevolent life, to keep my conscience void of offence towards God and man? This is the true use and this is the proper discipline of the Sabbath: thus live the souls of the just in the dungeons of the flesh; thus the blessings and glories of the Gospel are scattered over the face of the earth.

It is also an important part of the duties of the Sabbath, to converse with serious and impressive books: such, above all, as the great and eloquent ministers of the word have left behind them for a memorial to all time, for a pillar of light in the desert: by their arguments, their piety, and their learning, the devout Christian will find his reason enlightened, his faith confirmed, his knowledge expanded, his zeal inflamed, and he will rise up from the labours of the dead to act a wiser and better part among the living.

On the Sabbath, every man ought to think of death; not to think of death languidly, but to bring it in bold relief before his eyes; to gaze at it as if he were hereafter to meet it, and to learn from that effort of his mind, the most difficult, and the most sublime of all lessons. This is the season in which we are called on to fling off the drapery of the world, to forget we are powerful, to forget we are young, to forget we are rich, to pass over all the scenes of life, till we get at the last, and to remember only, that we must die, and be judged by the Son of God. For the Sabbath is not only a day of rest to the body, but it is a day of refreshment to the mind. The spirit of it is not only to lift up the body that is bowed down, but to purify the soul that is spotted by the world. Thou shalt do no manner of work, thou shalt not be the slave

of avarice, nor of ambition, nor of vanity, nor of pride; as your body is cheered for the toils of the days that are to come, your soul shall be more estranged from the temptations of life, and better guarded against its perils.

To conclude; one of the main pillars on which religion, and consequently our temporal and eternal happiness rests, is the conservation of the Sabbath; against this the natural course of human vices, and the designed attacks of profligate innovators, will be powerfully directed; here the best interests of mankind are to be defended by vigilance, by strong unsophisticated sense, and by a decided disregard of that ridicule that would throw an air of rusticity, inelegance, and even of bigotry, over these institutions, of themselves solemn and affecting; but from what they protect, inestimable. If ever we live to see the Sabbath dwindle down to an ordinary day of pleasure and of toil, the sun of Christianity is for a time set; God will give us up to the madness of our crimes, and after a century of horrors, we shall begin to remember that that there was once a day, which our forefathers set apart to repent them of their sins, and to worship the Lord their God.

SERMON XXII.

ON THE ERRORS OF YOUTH.

It is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth.—LAMENTATIONS OF JEREMIAH III. VERSE 27.

THE best days of life are soon gone; and time, that stayeth never for man, seems then to fly with greater speed. Death lingers to the old, the night is long to the sick man, the freshness of the morning will not bring him his strength, and he crieth out in vain for the peace of the grave. To all these the sun is slow in his course, and they bear the burthen of their days;—but youth is a dream of gladness which comes but to vanish; it is sweet as a smile that perishes; it is bright and rapid as the arrows of God when he shooteth his lightnings in the heavens.

If youth, then, is the season when the foundation of wisdom is to be laid, and if that season passeth away thus rapidly, we must not suffer occasions to escape us which admit of no substitute; nor neglect improvements which no other period of life will ever enable us to attain.

By the yoke, I understand the sacred writer to mean, in general, a state of discipline; everything which education teaches; the restraint of passions, the formation of habits, and the cultivation of faculties. It is not my intention, at present, to launch into so wide a field as that to which this explanation would seem to lead; but in pointing out a few of the characteristic faults of youth, to show in what manner the young are most likely to prove intractable to that yoke, which the prophet admonishes them to bear, and to make it clear what those sins and infirmities are which present the most serious obstacle to their progress in Christian improvement.

The first error I shall notice, and to which I consider youth

to be more exposed than any other period of life, is conceit; that which our Saviour characterizes under the name of high-mindedness, an over-weaning opinion of our own good and great qualities.

The reason of this is very obvious; the comparisons the young have made between themselves and their fellow-creatures are few in proportion to what they must make hereafter; absolute standard of excellence there is none;—we only think ourselves great because we think others little; and the more human beings we mingle with, and the more frequently we institute the comparison, the more probable it is that we shall find our equals, and our superiors in every accomplishment, and in every virtue.

We often observe men, whose sphere of life has been extremely confined, to be conceited through every period of their existence,—for the same reason that the young are conceited in its earliest period, because they have measured themselves with very few of their species, and mistaking all that they have *seen*, for all that there *is*, have so confirmed themselves in habitual conceit, that the delusion is totally impregnable to all future conviction.

Growing experience forces upon the young a perception of their unjust pretensions; they begin to discover that the world had made some progress in knowledge before their existence, and that their birth will not be hailed as the great era of wisdom and of truth.—It is necessary to live for a considerable time, and in various scenes, to perceive fully the wisdom of those practices which the world has established, not at the suggestion of any one individual, but from the gradual conviction of all, that they were best adapted to promote the general happiness. Our fathers, in their youthful days, questioned with as much acuteness, and decided with as much temerity as we can do in ours; if the progress of life has taught them to respect what in its origin they despised; if they have traced to the dictates of experience, many things which they at first attributed to prejudice and ignorance; if they have learnt to mistrust themselves and confide more in the general feelings and judgments of the world,—we ought not to suppose ourselves protected from the same revolution of opinions, or imagine that those early conceptions of human life shall be permanent now, which never have been permanent before.

These remonstrances against conceit (a failing as injurious to

the acquisition of Christian as of human improvement), are by no means directed against the spirit of free inquiry; from which a strong mind cannot and ought not to be debarred, any more than a strong body ought to be from perfect activity of motion; only the young should consider that it is not a necessary consequence that no reason can be found because they can find none; or even obtain none from a few persons to whom they have proposed their difficulty; and who, perhaps, can see and practice right without the power of explaining or defending it.

To incline to the one side or the other is natural and not blamable in the young; but when you are so liable to error, do not decide so that you cannot decently retract; avoid the fatal mistake of being so violent and positive that you are either sacramented for life, to the first crude system you have adopted, or forced to abandon it, hereafter, with the imputation of folly or of guilt. Courage and firmness in maintaining important opinions are worthy attributes, but in proportion as any opinion is marked by moderation and formed upon reflection, it is most likely to be retained with spirit. Extravagance in opinion is the parent of change, and frequent change produces at last a profligate indifference to all opinion. The person who is firm and consistent in his manhood, has most probably been modest in his youth; so true it is that all the humility so strongly enjoined by the Gospel is not calculated to repress and extinguish human powers, but to adjust the degree of confidence with which they are exercised, to the degree of excellence with which they are endowed, and to take care that that which is fallible should not be presumptuous.

All those who judge of the world by ideal rather than actual models of excellence, are in some little danger of becoming too contemptuous;—the imagination can easily represent somewhat superior to what ever existed or ever will exist; by assembling all the excellencies which nature has scattered among many real beings into one fictitious one; and, by omitting all defects, we have at once a monster of perfection, to which our sad medley of good and evil cannot be compared without disgrace.—Such is the case with the young who despise imperfection, because extended observation has not yet shown them, that the realities of life always fall far short of the pictures of the mind, and that they can easily conceive what they never will be able to find. The increase of years with many evils brings this good,—that our expecta-

tions of life are more accommodated to its true state; we are no longer surprised at flagrant inconsistencies in character, nor disgusted that prejudice and weakness should twine round the loftiest virtues; we are contented with the mixtures of good and evil, as it has been mingled for us and do not despise our species because God has made them lower than the angels.

Prudence is, perhaps, another cause that checks the indulgence of contempt as we advance in life; the world we find has inevitable difficulties enough without the wanton exasperation of our fellow-creatures. Contempt is commonly mistaken by the young for an evidence of understanding; but no habit of mind can afford this evidence, which is neither difficult to acquire nor meritorious when it is acquired; and as it is certainly very easy to be contemptuous, so it is very useless if not very pernicious. To discover the imperfections of others is penetration; to hate them for those faults is contempt. We may be clear-sighted without being malevolent, and make use of the errors we discover to learn caution, not to gratify satire; that part of contempt which consists of acuteness we may preserve; its dangerous ingredient is censure.

Contempt so far from being favourable to the improvement of the mind, is, perhaps, directly the reverse; it increases so rapidly that it soon degenerates into a passion for condemnation; the sense of what is good withers away, and the perception of evil becomes so keen and insatiable that every decision we make is satire, not judgment. All things have a double aspect; the contemptuous man sees them only on one side and does not believe they have any other; he has sacrificed an excellent faculty to an unchristian and malevolent indulgence.

Wisdom consists in doing difficult things which the mass of mankind cannot do: there is a much more compendious road to reputation in doing nothing and in blaming everything; in pointing out where others are deficient without proving where we excel. In this way a contemptuous person gives himself virtues by implication, as if the opposite perfection were immediately infused into his own mind, the moment he had discovered a defect in the mind of another. Real wisdom rather delights in positive exertions and seeks for reputation by showing what itself is, not by boasting what others are not.

Contempt and conceit are those faults which Christianity

so often condemns under the appellation of high-mindedness; they are passions connected with hatred; and utterly incompatible with that simple and venerable benevolence which our Saviour practised, loved and taught; and, surely, if any one has a right to look down upon the world with contempt, it is not he who has just entered into it; if great actions, admirable qualities and profound knowledge, are sources of superiority, they most probably will not be traced in that person to whom so short a period of existence has yet afforded little leisure for thought, word and deed.

Impatience of obscurity is another fault of which the young are very apt to be guilty; and a fault the more to be compassionated, because by a very little management it might be converted into a virtue. The highest virtue flows only from an obedience to the will of God, as evinced in the Scriptures; but we must meliorate the wrong if we cannot attain the right; and regulate that love of praise which we cannot extirpate. The best atonement we can make for loving the praise of men is by loving that praise only which is given to actions difficult, meritorious and good. Unfortunately the young are so fond of attracting notice, that they are often induced to purchase it at any price;—by spirited extravagance —super-eminence in vice—by a bold violation of the restrictions of society—by paradox—by a witty contempt for the good maxims which safely guide slower understandings—by assuming a versatile profligacy of opinion, such as has sometimes marked brilliant men of extraordinary parts—by an unripe skepticism which doubts before comprehension or discussion—by levity, which laughs when the wise tremble, and would mock at God, to gain a moment's applause from the lowest of his creatures. By this impatience, displaying itself in some one or other of these shapes, the young are often irretrievably ruined. They do not reflect that they must be little before they can be great; that the privilege of being listened to must be gained by listening; and that he who is too vain to begin with being insignificant, will most probably be so through the whole of his existence. There is one path to real fame, but that is slippery and steep; many fall headlong down; and few ever arrive at the summit. If you have power, begin, but take the true path or none; be too proud to implore a little praise for your follies and perversities; if you cannot dig, be ashamed to beg; you had better be the lowest of man than glorious in the annals of sin, and

honoured by the vicious only because you have exceeded them in vice; this is a greatness of which any man who could be truly great would be heartily ashamed. Let us be honestly obscure or rightfully eminent. The praise of this world is an idle breath, even when it is well deserved; but when it breathes on the wicked, it only reddens the flames of hell.

There can hardly be any occasion that I should descant much upon the impetuosity of youth; it is so sure of bringing with it its own corrective, and the inconvenience is so obviously and immediately connected with its cause, that there is less need of proving its existence or animadverting upon its consequences. We should always frame in our minds the most consummate model of each virtue; fashioning our own conduct upon it, as well as we are able, and sure that a proportionate excellence will always be observed between them, whatever be the absolute distance between the standard and the imitation. Impetuosity then is not the most perfect model of courage; there is something in it to admire and much to blame; we must select from it the admirable and never rest satisfied till we have wrought out a perfect image of what that virtue is which impetuosity counterfeits; and to the slight infusion of which it owes all the little admiration it excites. It is very possible to be firm in the maintainance of rights, and in the discharge of duties, without being violent. That conviction of the justice of our cause, which is one of the great props of virtue, is best preserved when we are least likely to impair it by the violence of passion. When we are growing higher in our own estimation, by the moderation we exhibit, and by that management which enables us to become firm instead of fierce. Impetuosity is still more useless in the business than in the dangers of life. The power of good sense is as irresistible as the power of gravitation; there are disturbing forces; but in the great cycle of ages the world is governed by calm and circumspect men; whose sagacity in discerning and whose consistency in acting are rarely disturbed by emotions which they cannot control. The greatest of all men are those who can use their passions as auxiliaries without obeying them as masters. But involuntary impetuosity is so much an enemy to understanding that it is better to want passions altogether than blindly to obey them.

There is no fault which Christianity labours more to correct than that of an impetuous mind. "Could I not call down legions of Angels?" said Jesus, as he went captive to the hall

of Pilate. He spake no word against them, say the Scriptures, though they clothed him in the mock robe of majesty, and beat him with rods, and crowned him with thorns; and when they had nailed his limbs to the cross, he said, "Lord, be merciful to them; they know not what they do."

These are the principal errors by an attention to which the salutary yoke of discipline may be best supported in the season of youth. To put on that humility which is so well accommodated to the beginning of wisdom and the beginning of life, will spare future shame and future change; and enable us to pursue a simple, consistent tenour of improvement in piety and knowledge. In subduing a tendency to contempt we shall avoid malevolent feelings, which always bring with them their own punishment; we shall not become blind to perfections and curiously acute only in the detection of evil. In reducing vanity within due bounds, we shall remain under our own laws instead of yielding obedience to a multitude; we shall live, not in dramatic agitation, but with firmness, freedom and content. In curbing early impetuosity and converting it into steady perseverance in affairs, and cool intrepidity in dangers, we shall pass through life safely and prosperously, and with as little experience of evil as wisdom can ensure in a world where wisdom does not reign alone.—The sum and glory of these individual improvements are a rich progress in Christian wisdom.—A mind beautifully inlaid with the thoughts of angels, and wrought about with the signs and marks of Heaven. Bear this yoke for a while when you are young that you may be free when you are old; that you may walk through life unmanacled by passions, unchained by lusts, spurning the lash of Satan, and deriding the bondage of sin; that you may come to that holy and happy land where no yoke is borne; where the souls of just men are illumined with amazing glory, and compassed round about by the holiness of God.

SERMON XXIII.

ON SELF-EXAMINATION.

We spend our years, as it were a tale that is told.—PSALMS XC. VERSE 9.

WHEN we hear a story pleasantly set forth in appropriate language and with well-contrived incidents, the mind hangs upon it eagerly, and falls from a certain height of enjoyment when it is concluded: there is no sense of the passage of time: but the wit and genius of the narrator abridge it to the duration of a moment; so it is with the years of the rich and great; they are spent as a tale that is pleasantly told; there is no monotony in the events, no slowness in the succession; novelty ever refreshes the fable, and genius ever adorns it: on a sudden the noise is all hushed, the tale is told; our years are brought to an end, and the silence of death succeeds.

I seize then with some eagerness upon the occasion which the conclusion of the year presents, to press upon you the duty of self-examination, and to protest against that life which is passed without pause and without reflection.

It is these artificial divisions of time which teach men to think of its rapid pace; whenever the idea of change is introduced, there comes with it that melancholy which is the parent of virtue; the mind is carried on from one vicissitude to another, till it stops, and trembles at the last; now it is that our thoughts are more than ordinarily serious; now it is that we listen to the lowly breathings of conscience, that we remember that this world is not the last scene of existence, that we catch a distant glimpse of the grave; how blest are they who hear from that conscience the voice of praise, and see beyond that grave the prospect of salvation.

We spend our years as a tale that is told; that is, we live

so as to banish reflection; we do not enter into any serious computation of the progress we have made in godliness; we do not balance the increase of virtue against the waste of life; there is no care that the soul should be more pure because the body is more frail; that the inward man should be more fit to live with Christ, as the outward man is more ready to fall down into his native dust.

To stop this easy and fatal flow of life, and to extract religious wisdom from years, we must have recourse to self-examination; another year of my life is gone; am I better by that year? is there one bad passion which I have conquered, reduced, or even attacked? am I more respectable in my own eyes? am I more the child of grace? do I feel an increased power over sin? can I fairly say for the year that is past, that I have done something? that I have advanced a single step towards the prize of the high calling? or must I say, after the sun has carried light and heat through all the nations; after nature has gone through her great circle; and the bud, and the leaf, and the fruit have once more appeared, that I am where I was before, still sinning and resolving; still weeping and offending; a feeble, contrite being, unable to attain the virtue which I seek, and sure of being punished for the sin which I cannot avoid?

Let us first remember, in discussing the utility of self-examination, that it must be done at repeated intervals when it is profitable; or it must be done once for all, when it is too late; if you wish to moderate those reproaches which an human being makes to his own heart, give them their entrance now: hear them at this time in obedient silence, or they will rush in when the tale is nearly told, and visit you with such anguish as might well be avoided by a life of moderate wretchedness; if you love difficulty better than despair, and are not willing to purchase a respite from present pain at the expense of eternal affliction, do this now that you may not hereafter be compelled to do worse. Judge, or God will judge; repent, or he will punish.

To avail ourselves of such a period as this, for the purposes of self-examination, is more necessary in this great city, than in any other situation, because there are fewer blanks in our existence here than there can be anywhere else. We struggle here not only for wealth and power, and pleasure, but for the greatest wealth, the highest power, and the keenest pleasure.—If the game of life is played elsewhere with attention,

it is played here with passionate avidity: the sun goes down too soon; and we chide the morning star till it brings us back to the world. It is not here that men are ever driven back into their own hearts; men never see their own hearts; they know not what dwells there; whether it be the powers of darkness, or the angels of God.

It is not merely the want of leisure in great cities, which makes it necessary to enter into that voluntary self-examination to which we should never be impelled from the circumstances in which we are placed, but that according to the common notions of men, there are no objects in great cities which can inspire solemn and religious ideas. And yet, where is God more visible than in great cities? Can we see infinite wisdom and power in torrents, mountains, and in clouds, and not discern them in this wonderful arrangement of rights, appetites and pretensions? Is God not visible in laws and constitutions? Is he not visible in refinement? Is he not visible in reasoning? Are not poets and orators and statesmen more stupendous creations of God than all the depth of the valleys, and all the strength of the hills? If we are to be lured to God by all we see of his greatness and his power, here are his noblest works, and here his sublimest power; here he is to be felt, and honoured and adored.

An important reason for dedicating such periods as these to the duties of self-examination is that our deficiencies must necessarily be perceived; we cannot shelter ourselves under a belief that the shade of improvement is too delicate to be sensible; the year has either made us better or it has not; we may not go away from such an inquisition satisfied, but we can scarcely go away deceived: the very doubt itself is an answer. If the seventieth part of our rational existence has glided away, and left us doubtful whether we have gained upon any one vice, the hesitation itself is almost decisive of our failure.

Self-examination is important if life eternal is important; it is not one of those exercises to which any notion of degree can be applied; it is not *more* or *less* useful, but it is *indispensable;* it *must* be; without it there is no Christ, no righteousness, no life hereafter; for it is not pretended that any man is born to continued righteousness; no man from an original sweetness and felicity of creation, goes on doing well from the beginning of his days to the end. And if sin is universal, inquisition must be so too; and the duty of self-examination never be forgotten or excused.

It is not so much the higher crimes which have need of self-examination. No one asks of a murderer on the opening of the year, to reflect on blood-guiltiness; no one invites an adulteress to think on her husband and children, and on that misery which she is preparing for her own soul: these feelings do not wait for our call; they come unasked for, and unwanted to torment the guilty before their time. But the vices which need self-examination are those which condemn us in the sight of God, without creating in our minds any instant and pressing alarm. All the fruitful family of original sin, pride, anger, lust, hypocrisy, deceit, envy, hatred, malice, and all uncharitableness; for all these things a man shall surely die, though they do not make him pale with fear, or rouse him from his sleep, to tremble at the spectres of a guilty mind.

Nor let it be supposed, that in urging our fellow-creatures to self-examination, we put them upon any exercise which is difficult or profound; or in which one human creature can make a greater progress than another; for it is fine to observe, that reason, when she meddles with science, or with anything which has a cold and distant connection with human life, can wait to be intricate and subtle; she can toil through many steps, and be content with small acquirements, and wait patiently and retrace carefully; but when she comes to the business of salvation, to right and wrong, to holy and unholy, she is as quick as an eagle's wing, and as rapid as the lightning of God. In a moment she pierces through a thousand intricacies, shivers into atoms the dull heartless sophistry which is opposed to her course, and, breaking into the chambers of the soul, scares guilt with the amazing splendour of truth. Seek and ye shall find; ask and ye shall have; knock and it shall be opened to you. No man ever turned to look for the evil that was within him and was repulsed with the difficulty. Whatever God has made necessary, God has made easy; every man who searcheth his heart diligently, will find in it the issues of life.

There is nothing which can be substituted instead of self-examination, renewed at intervals; self-examination voluntarily and intentionally entered into. Sickness prompts us to examine our own hearts; but we may not be in that manner visited by the Almighty; old age warns us to this salutary task; but we may perish in youth; misfortune is a great master of reflection; but we may be successful in our sins,

and a long course of lucky vice may obliterate every chance and possibility of melioration.

Self-examination drives men to great exertions by inflicting upon them great pains; for the remembrance of a mis-spent life commonly brings on remorse, a feeling that the harm cannot be recalled or repaired; it is not like falsehood which may be corrected, and injustice which may be atoned for; but the evil done is often out of the power of repentance, and beyond the possibility of change.—It is this which makes a man start up in the midst of irreverent old age, and struggle to give a few months or years to God, doubting of mercy, and not knowing if the relics of his days will be accepted at the throne of grace. If timely thought can save us from a state like this, it is, indeed, worth while to think.

In this process of self-examination, we should, among other subjects of inquiry, put to our own hearts these two questions: are we happy ourselves; are we beloved by our fellow-creatures?—if we are really contented, it is no mean evidence that we have a right to be so: if no human being is in a state of hostility against us, it is presumptive evidence, that we have given no occasion of offence; by tracing up our miseries we shall arrive at our vices; and by putting on the feelings of our enemies, and entering into their views of our conduct, we may make their hostility a motive for compensation, and a mean of improvement.

In self-examination, I would have a man think of death; he should ask his own heart if he is afraid of death; why he is afraid of death? what he has done to make it an object of fear? what he could do to make it an object of hope? in what way he can make ready to appear before his Saviour, and all the host of Heaven, at the sound of the everlasting trumpet, when the heavens and the earth are expiring? The use of self-examination is to prepare for the worst, to place ourselves in other situations and other circumstances before they really exist, that we may meet them with the proper energy, when they are brought round by the revolutions of the world. The business is to think of sickness in health, to reflect upon old age in youth, to remember death in life, to think of the necessity of rendering an account now, while perfect freedom of action remains: to feel that these are not situations which may happen, but situations which must happen. Consider the life which human beings lead, and tell me if there are many men who put these things faithfully and strongly to their own hearts. Look at a young man in all the flower and freshness

of youth; he acts, and he thinks, and he speaks, as if that condition of body was ever to remain; he forgets when his strength is gone, and his nerves are trembling with old age, that another set of opinions, congenial to the mouldering frame, will get possession of his mind; and that all his animal bravery and animal happiness will vanish as the machine decays by which it was put in action; so with injustice and oppression, when a poor man is ground to the earth, when the wealthy *Ahab* says, "His vineyard shall be mine; there is no judgment for the poor; I am the Lord of the earth;" how foolish to forget that God sees it all; that the great day will come when the oppressor will be turned into the criminal; when the master will find a greater master than he; when every wildness and wantonness of power will be subjected to the searching eye of omnipotent justice; therefore, the use of self-examination is to see all these consequences remotely, and at a distance to measure them fairly, and to deliberate duly upon them, while we are yet secure; not to determine upon actions which must affect our future lives, and endanger our salvation through the influence of feelings, which will cease with that portion of existence from which they spring, and to which they are appropriate; but the truly evangelical habit of self-examination will teach us to consider the life of man in all its parts, and under all its revolutions; will teach us to diminish those sufferings with which it concludes, by moderating those enjoyments with which it begins, and enable us to endure that awful responsibility which awaits us in another existence by inuring us to justice and righteousness in this.

In entering into this species of judgment with ourselves, we must resolve not to be deceived; the Scriptures do not only say, try thy heart, but try thy heart *diligently;* meaning thereby, that men are subject to every species of deception in this exercise, and that nothing can render it edifying but an honest and manly resolution to get at the truth; to examine into such matters falsely, and feebly, is only to disturb pleasure, without improving godliness; it only renders sin bitter, without bringing us nearer to righteousness; therefore, the affair is to be insisted upon earnestly, and subjected to calm revision; and every habit is to be encouraged which can render a man candid and impartial to himself, for wretched indeed is the state of that man, who inquires only to approve, and who throws a veil over the dangers of sin, by the mockery of pious investigation.

I have laid some stress, through the whole of my discourse, upon the necessity of systematic and intentional self-examination, which I have done for two reasons:—because self-examination, which arises from accident, is often too late, or it may not take place at all. Some men pass through life without meeting with any serious and warning visitation of God; they pass through life, therefore, as ignorant of themselves as of any human being with whom they have never held the smallest intercourse; there are men who come near to the grave without having once entered into their own hearts, or having the slightest conception of that system of passions and feelings which is going on there, and working their everlasting happiness or destruction. Many a man dies, possessing all other knowledge than the best; master of the secrets of nature; deeply versed in the habits of mankind; great in the science of governing; completely ignorant of himself; not knowing, to the hour of his dissolution, whether he is the child of sin or the servant of Christ.

Blessed, indeed, blessed above all his fellow-creatures, is he who can bid adieu to the concluding year, without an aching heart; who can stand upon the threshold of the fresh time, and look back, to say he has not lived in vain; how pleasant, to open his arms to the coming spring, and to think that that which bringeth flowers and green herbs, and layeth the unkind winds to rest, shall bring, also, its increase of piety, and of wisdom, and calm the troubles of the mind. In all Europe, the new year is celebrated with joy; it is a feast to the peasant, and to the child; and there is no man, however enlightened his understanding, who will look down on such pleasures, without some share of complacency and approbation; they have their foundation in the human mind, which is ever prone to hope, and looks forward to brighter seasons and fairer skies, with the expectations of some great advantage, though it knows not precisely what; let us give way to the general impulse, and usher in the new year by some act of Christian mercy and goodness, forgive a debt, forget an injury, hold out your hand to a repentant brother, take back to your heart an offending child, go into the darkness of the dungeon, and refresh the sorrows of a languishing prisoner; make this season holy before the Lord; do something on it, which may gain you eternal life; before the last days are come, before the years are brought to an end, as it were a tale that is told.

SERMON XXIV.

ON DISSIPATION.

I said to my heart, go to, now, enjoy pleasure; I will prove thee with mirth; but behold, this also is vanity.—ECCLESIASTES II. VERSE 1.

THE former part of this soliloquy of Solomon, to his own heart, we have all pronounced to *our* hearts; we all have said, "Enjoy pleasure; I will prove thee with mirth;" but have we been wise, or fortunate enough, to add, with the royal moralist,—*this also is vanity?*

In the progress of society, fresh crimes, follies, and virtues, as well as new sciences, and arts, emerge into notice; and to study mankind aright, we must observe, no less the circumstances in which he is placed, than the feelings, passions, and talents, of which he is composed. To savage men, surrounded by enemies, and trusting to their daily activity for their daily support, abundance and ease are the greatest of human blessings; as society advances, the misery of man seems, by a singular inversion of destiny, to proceed from the very cause of his original happiness; thousands are rendered miserable by tranquillity and opulence; are ruined by a fatal competence, which extinguishes every principle of action, and feel that their existence is a burthen, only because they have escaped from the curse of Adam, and are not doomed to eat their bread by the sweat of their brow.

When we are taught by our wants, we are well taught; when we are left to act from our understanding, our conduct is generally more imperfect and erroneous. The employment of time is, with a great part of the human species, who are exempted from necessary labour, a very difficult concern; and among the number who enjoy the hazardous privilege of choosing for themselves, there are not very many

who have the happiness of choosing well; the common expedient is pleasure, by which, in the language of the world, is meant a succession of company, amusement and diversion; an excessive pursuit of pleasure has received the name of dissipation, and to this trite, but important subject, I shall endeavour, on this day, to call your serious attention.

Moderate indulgence glides so imperceptibly into vicious excess, that it is by no means an easy task to point out their mutual confines. Some evidence, however, an attentive observation of our own souls will necessarily afford. Whenever we perceive that the common occurrences of life become languid and tedious; when domestic society palls upon us; when we find ourselves perpetually escaping from the present hour, and looking eagerly forward to the future moments of vanity and display; when occasional solitude and reflection become the worst of evils, and splendour, crowd, and solicitude, the ever-recurring objects of our wishes and our cares; when instruction has no charms; when good actions can no longer animate and delight; then has the soul lost its dignity and its strength; then is the rational being fast hastening to decay; then is it time to remember that these things, also, are but vanity.

Among other objections to dissipation, it will be found to proceed from erroneous notions of pleasure: if it necessarily involved any struggle between duty and gratification, it would be more easily understood why the latter so often triumphed over the former consideration; but the most dissipated men are the first to complain of the dullness and sameness of the pleasures they pursue; they cannot quit what they do not love; they are wearied, but have no asylum; wisdom and virtue are not to be recalled at pleasure; there is no retreat; they are doomed to be irrevocably frivolous, to trifle on to the brink of the grave, though conscience whispers at every step, this is not pleasure; it was not for this that man was made after the image of his God.

How changed is our estimation of all worldly things, when sober experience awakens us from the dreams of youth.—We begin with expecting to find in the common circle of ordinary amusement, every brilliant and every fascinating quality of our nature; we enjoy, in anticipation, the pictures of fancy, the delight of eloquence, the surprise of wit, the charm of courtesy, the union of joyous hearts and creative minds.—What is it we do meet? too often a weariness of

life;—too often the escaping from a man's own heart;—too often that melancholy dejection, which says, "I have no pleasure in doing this, but I have no courage to do better than this." How different from this species of society is that wise, necessary, but occasional intercourse with our fellow-creatures, which is founded upon mutual regard; which is a contrast with previous solitude, or a relaxation from previous toil; where there is some real commerce of understanding, and some real gratification of regard; where melancholy is dispelled, cheerfulness promoted, friendship confirmed, prejudice refuted, or reason sanctioned in her decisions: and yet, how little of such pure and innocent pleasure does it fall to our lot to enjoy. Do you ask me why? this is the reason; and I would it were as easy to find a cure as a cause: because our minds are unexercised, and our hearts are not overflowing with the recollections of benevolence gratified, and passion subdued; because we have not courage for the toil, which is to make the relaxation sweet, because the love of admiration governs us, because we know not that the very essence of pleasure is rarity, that it is impossible, from the very constitution of our nature, to preserve the keenness of first sensations, or to prevent that apathy into which the mind, jaded with constant enjoyment, perpetually subsides.—Let no one imagine that it is an easy thing to lay aside the habits of dissipation at will; a valuable and systematic employment of time is acquired with difficulty, and, to be acquired at all, should be soon begun. An industrious manhood is rarely grafted on a youth of folly; but a youth of folly will still keep you young, though you have numbered many days; and a hoary head will surprise you in the midst of youthful gratification and frivolous amusement; yet, there is a time, when retirement is comely and decent; at which, not only the dictates of reason and religion, but even the opinions of the world require it; there is a time, when you should carry gray hairs, and paleness, and weakness, into the midst of those whose love will support your declining years, when you should grow old, and die in the bosom of your family; when you should spare to your fellow-creatures the melancholy spectacle of irreverent old age, of levity without joy, of infirmity without wisdom: blessed is the hoary head, which is found in the paths of wisdom; but no blessings fall on him who has grown old without growing wise, and

has gathered nothing from the lapse of years but the outward symbols of decay.

One of the most obvious consequences of dissipation is the destruction of all the mental powers. In men upon whom the greater part of the business of the world, and the advancement of knowledge principally depend, this evil is the most inexcusable; there is no character which ensures disrespect so much as that of a trifling, frivolous man; he is measured by the magnitude of those objects which form the laudable pursuits of his sex; we cannot forget the height of science to which he might have ascended; the useful functions he might have fulfilled; the career of glory he might have run; the religious wisdom he might have treasured up. He has no excuse in a natural indelible mildness of character, which may betray the firmness of resolution and communicate a greater force to the social feelings; he sins against the most exalted and popular qualities of a man without gaining any others in return; he is trifling without being amiable; weak without being delicate; and ignorant without being affectionate or humane. Neither let any shelter themselves under the plea that dissipation does not sacrifice that time which ought to be given up to more important occupations; religion bids us all prepare for an hereafter; benevolence bids us alleviate the miseries of the present scene; knowledge invites us to contemplate and understand it: the first hallows the mind, the next softens it, the last strengthens, exalts and adorns it. To love religion is to love eternity and to love salvation; but to love knowledge as the means of complying with the injunctions of that religion may not be sufficiently impressed upon the minds of us all. In an advanced period of society it is the most effectual preventive against the perils of idle opulence; it economizes the most useful possessions of a state, its talents; prevents the mournful waste of genius and turns the powers of our minds into the real channels in which they ought to flow.—Against the fair and moderate pursuit of pleasure, I hope no one imagines me so mistaken as to contend; the love of knowledge will render the extravagant and dissipated pursuit of it as distasteful as it is pernicious; nothing frees a man so effectually from the shameful dependence on foreign aid, and renders him so contented with himself and his own home; he is no longer compelled to flee from the restless activity of the mind to a circle of melancholy and insipid amusement. This is not all; to exercise the

mind is a duty, it is an essential part of righteousness; the agency upon the world, the power of doing good increases immensely with the increase of our intellectual powers. It matters not by what science, by what studies our minds are exercised, if they be ready to be turned on the conduct of life, the interests of mankind, and the promotion and defence of religion. Take, for instance, the task of early education commonly devolved upon mothers; is there one of greater importance in the whole circle of human affairs? and what daily ravages are committed on the characters of future men, by affectionate parents, who mean to do well without any adequate power of seconding their good intentions, and who lament, when too late, that they wasted in dissipation the season of improvement, that their minds have never been strengthened by difficulties, or fertilized by thought.

Dissipation is not less injurious to the qualities of the heart than to the powers of the mind. The dissipated become impatient of anything which is not immediately amusing; they cannot submit to the present sacrifice which virtue requires, or wait for the remote gratifications which it affords. The passing moment must yield its tribute of pleasure at every expense of health, fortune, and inward satisfaction.—All control over inclination is gradually lost, and the apprehension of distant consequences ceases to influence the conduct. Whenever we place our happiness, not in the good feelings of the heart, but in the lively impressions of the senses, every virtue becomes disgusting and dull; the child leaves its aged parent to solitude and disease; the mother, ashamed of her advancing years, deserts her children.—The father flies from the gloomy sameness of his family, and every beautiful feeling is erased from the heart;—the appearance of misery excites not a desire to relieve, but anger at the intrusion of disagreeable sensations, a feeling of injury at the interruption of elegant pleasure. In the midst of these pleasures, in the full current of thoughtless joy, I pray you for one moment pause; it is not much to give to salvation, to virtue, and to wisdom; for one moment pause and think on the motley destiny of man; not far from the scenes of your joy are crowded together the children of labour and sorrow, and of affliction; did you ever seek that cure of dissipation? Did you ever appal your heart? Did you ever beat down your gayety to the dust by the near aspect and approach of the misery of man? not such as it is painted in books, but

such as you may find it, at this instant, not a span's length from this very spot; dissipation can never endure such tremendous sights as these; the very walls seem to cry out, why have you forgotten these wretched people in the midst of your pleasures? The sight of a poor man's dwelling, the food he eats, the bed on which he lies, these things scare and admonish the voluptuous heart more than all the ministers of God. Yet think not that these sights destroy pleasure; they are the only passport to pleasure; first deserve it, then enjoy it; go strengthen infirmity, heal disease, lighten the load of human misery, pay back in humanity the loan of opulence, then say to, your heart, go to now, enjoy pleasure, I will prove thee with mirth; and then only you will escape the sad conclusion:—this also is vanity.

The love of expense is not one of the least miseries consequent upon dissipation; it produces meanness, dishonesty, and unhappiness; the mind must be at ease for the cultivation of virtue, and there can be no tranquillity where such a constant struggle is maintained between penury and ostentation, where everything is splendour without and distress within, where the world is to be deceived and the melancholy reflection supported, that the means of solid comfort are daily sacrificed to idle and unsubstantial parade. The dictates of common sense and the feelings of nature are never violated with impunity; the most intolerable of all sensations is that of constant self-reproach; to feel that days, and months, and years are gliding away without leaving to us any acquisition of virtue or of knowledge; that our resolutions of amendment are never proof against temptation, that our life is passing on without utility to others or dignity to ourselves; this is the bitterness of soul which riseth up when the head is crowned with flowers and the wine mantleth in the cup; this is the handwriting on the wall, at the sight of which the spirit of a man fainteth within him, as did the spirit of Belshazzar, the king, when he feasted with his thousand lords.

Is it possible, I may ask, in speaking of dissipation, is it possible that we, who are daily enlightened by the sublime morality and perfect example of Christ, can we believe that the whole order of nature was reversed, and the stupendous prodigy of revelation exhibited to the earth, to clothe with immortality a wretched being that has trifled away seventy years of existence, and who is only loosened from the bonds of folly by corruption and death? Do you think it is to be

threescore and ten years of mirth, an hour of repentance, and an eternity of joy? By what courtesy are you exempted from the curse of Adam? Has God given to one the sweat and the toil, and to another the smell of the blossom, the shadow of the leaf, and the taste of the fruit? This life is to every description and condition of human beings, a life of labour and exertion; of labour either of body or of mind. The labour of the rich is to combat their passions, to fortify their virtues, to study and to follow the law of the Gospel, to prepare themselves diligently for another and a better state of existence, to turn their leisure to the cultivation of knowledge and the improvement of human happiness; to take advantage of their condition, by being exemplary as they are eminent, courteous as they are elevated, bounteous as they are rich; by making themselves the protectors of the distressed and the stewards of the poor; with these general habits of life, there are times when a wearied mind and body, when the social feelings, when reason itself, call for, and justify relaxation and joy; the pleasures of the good are as dear to God as their prayers; he is with them in the house of joy and in the temple of religion; he is in the midst of them wherever they are gathered together; through him they are happy without fear and without reproving, and while they prove their hearts with mirth they are not compelled to add that this also is vanity and sorrow.

SERMON XXV.

ON THE CONVERSION OF SAINT PAUL.

And straightway he preached Christ in the synagogues, that he is the son of God. But all that heard him were amazed, and said, is not this he that destroyed them which called on his name in Jerusalem.—Acts ix. verses 20, 21.

Of all the arguments dwelt on for the defence of Christianity, none have been more forcibly or more successfully urged, than the conversion of St. Paul; and it certainly is a circumstance which cannot be explained without the supposition of something improbable, or the belief of something miraculous.

The treatment which Christ, his disciples, and his converts experienced from the Jews, would (if other proofs were wanting), sufficiently convince us of the obstinate adhesion of that people to the religion of their ancestors, and demonstrate how soon their watchful jealousy, on such a subject, would break out into cruel persecution. The Pagans were, upon the whole, not merely tolerant, but careless in matters of religion. Poets vilified their gods; comedians ridiculed them upon the stage; philosophers denied their existence; the priests continued to sacrifice, the people to believe, and the government was content: but the religion of the Jews was deeply fixed and eagerly defended. It was their creed that God had singled them out from the whole earth as the people of his providence and protection; they considered themselves as separated from the darkened hemisphere of the Pagans; they believed that they had been fed by angels, guided by miracles, taught by prophets, and approached by God. They were proudly mindful of these distinctions; they studied their law with active investigation, and defended it with ardent

zeal; proselytism, therefore, effected among a people of this description, is certainly more important as to the proof it affords, than any ordinary change from one religion to another; the stronger the resistance, the greater the force which overcomes it. Prejudices so deeply imbibed, no common power can eradicate, and no usual force of argument refute.

In the twenty-second chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, St. Paul, in declaring his conversion, thus describes himself: "I am verily a man which am a Jew, born in Tarsus; and was brought up at the feet of Gamaliel, and taught according to the perfect manner of the law of the fathers, and was zealous towards God, as ye all are this day."

St. Paul, therefore, seems to have been a man thoroughly instructed in the Jewish law; the opinions of his nation were confirmed by the tenour of his education; and belief in him was not merely a popular opinion caught from living with a multitude who were of the same creed, but an extended system, disciplined by regular learning, and defended with scholastic acuteness. The pride of the scholar was added to the bigotry of the Jew, and he would resist conviction from vanity as well as from faith.

If St. Paul had remained quiet, at the first propagation of Christianity; if he had taken no active part at this interesting period; if he had viewed its progress with indifference; if he had suspended his conviction till the sensation of novelty, too active for reason, had subsided, and left him to the free exercise of his understanding; we could not have been so much surprised that the result should have terminated in his conversion; but from the first appearance of Christianity, he was its decided foe; at the first dawn of this new light he rose up in bitterness and in anger, to extinguish it; and to bear witness that it was from men and not from God. In the above-mentioned chapter, Saint Paul says, "I persecuted this way unto death, binding, and delivering into prison, both men and women; as also the high priest doth bear me witness, and the estate of the elders, from whom I received letters unto the brethren, and went to Damascus to bring them which were bound unto Jerusalem for to be punished." And yet this is he whom bondage could not make less zealous, who, under all varieties of misfortune, and in every species of sorrow, remained steadfast in faith, and immovable in conviction; who, with that high-principled courage which always keeps fortune beneath its feet, and rises superior to every

event, preached, from the midst of guards, and swords, and chains, the truths of the Gospel; those truths which shook the heart of Felix with fear, and drove Agrippa to the brink of conversion. This is the fact which comes home to the bosoms of men; this is the history which represses the confidence of infidelity, and breaks the slumber of indifference. The enmity of St. Paul is turned to protection; the bitterness of persecution is exchanged for the zeal of friendship; and he is made an humble instrument for promoting the Gospel, whose ardent spirit had most powerfully impelled him to its destruction.

After this general sketch of his life which I have already quoted, St. Paul proceeds to state the particular circumstances of his conversion: "Whereupon, as I went to Damascus with authority and commission from the chief priests; at mid-day, oh king, I saw in the way a light from heaven, above the brightness of the sun shining round about me, and them which were with me, and when we were all fallen to the earth, I heard a voice from heaven." And he then proceeds to relate the command he received from heaven; a passage in the Scriptures too well known to need quotation.

These are the facts respecting the conversion of St. Paul, and from these facts it must follow as an inevitable consequence, (if this miracle be not true,) that St. Paul deceived himself, or that he deceived others; that he was either a dupe, or an impostor. We will first inquire, if it be probable that St. Paul endeavoured to impose on the world a miracle in which he himself had not a thorough belief, and the obvious mode of beginning such an investigation, will be to examine into the motives which, under any rules by which the human character ought to be judged, could have influenced St. Paul to the commission of such a despicable fraud, and implicated him in such a shameless piece of hypocrisy.

I believe it may be laid down as a general rule, that every man will love that which is virtuous and honourable where he can gain nothing by perfidy and vice. No man is bad for nothing, no man covers himself with crimes, from a mere lust for disgrace, or an eager relish for infamy; self-approbation is not bartered for nothing; every human being naturally loves the praise of his own heart, and the approbation of his fellow-creatures; and if he sells them at all, he sells them for some pleasure that is poignant, some gratification that will repay him for infamy and remorse.

The question then is, what motive St. Paul could have had

to sacrifice the consideration in which he was held by his countrymen; to expose himself to ridicule and to contempt, to persecution, to poverty, to the most extreme and the most varied distress; could the Christians hold out to him any magnificent temptations? could they buy him by the gorgeous allurements of honour, power and opulence? alas, what could the Christians give? begging themselves for life, for bread, for compassion; flying to rocks and caverns not to conceal crimes, but to worship that Saviour who had just left the earth; what hopes and promises could they hold out to mercenary talents and venal ambition? The persecuted cannot protect; power is not in the gift of poverty; the indigent and afflicted have nothing to offer but a share in their misery: they could say to St. Paul, be a Christian as we are; we have not, indeed, much of worldly honour to bestow; but you may share our persecution;—you may become its most important subject;—you may be the leading martyr of our sect;—you may be a more illustrious outcast, a more splendid victim, than has yet graced the annals of our misery. You may live in sorrow, and die in torture; this must have been the language of Christian seduction, and these the irresistible temptations which worked upon St. Paul, to prostitute his honour, and desert his religion; he must have submitted to be base, in order to be miserable; he must have waded through imposture to martyrdom, and thought no artifice too mean to encounter difficulty, and court persecution.

If St. Paul did not believe his own testimony, but was imposing on mankind, what evidence can we ever hear with confidence and conviction? with him seems to rise or fall the credibility of all human assertion: mere words we may perhaps mistrust: the sad knowledge of man's depravity may justify us even in doubting of oaths, and allow us to balance the credibility against the solemnity of the assertion; but he who strengthens his testimony by his misfortunes, cannot be any longer suspected; he who is beaten, and shipwrecked, and chained, cannot be considered as the martyr of obstinate fraud; he has washed off every stain of suspicion by his blood, and has shown in the noble catalogue of his woes, the heroic patience of conviction, and the unshaken courage of truth. Then, again, if any considerations of policy had influenced his conduct, he would have softened the odium of apostasy by the gradual dereliction of former connections; but observe the singular circumstances of his conversion; he sets out for Damascus, an infidel bloated with rage and yearning for

blood: his errand of death was a legal one; he bore with him those credentials of cruelty which he had eagerly sought for, and easily obtained: he went forth the accredited minister of Jewish vengeance, their favourite assassin, amid the shoutings and rejoicings of the people. So he went forth; how did he return? with a heart softened by sorrow, and bursting with remorse, lowly, broken, and penitent; not the minister of Jewish vengeance, but its object; preaching Christ, and lamenting with tears and sighs, the infatuation of his past life; this is the portentous fact which vouches so strongly for Christianity; here it is, if anywhere, that the finger of God is to be seen in our religion.

Let us now consider if there was any reason to believe that St. Paul was himself deceived, and that this miracle, instead of a real revelation, was nothing more than the phantasm of a deluded imagination.

If the character of St. Paul were such as to justify us in this supposition, and induce us to believe, that a mind too intensely heated had lost all wholesome control over the fancy; the difficulty is to conceive why this self-created vision did not rather model itself in conformity, than in opposition to the whole former tenour of his words and actions. If his miracle had spurred him on to new asperity, and fresh bitterness against the Christians, it would have accorded very well with the usual history of fanaticism; and the extravagancies of his fancy would have preserved a certain affinity to his ordinary ideas. Madness does not reverse the notions which a mind in health intensely dwells upon, but points them, and gives them new vigour. It does not struggle against the tide of the conceptions; but hurries that tide on with fresh impetuosity. St. Paul, a visionary and a madman, would have hated the Christians worse than in his sober mind; if not, I will venture to assert, that it is the only instance on record where an enthusiastic supposition of intercourse with heaven has cured fanaticism instead of increasing it, and to suppose such a case, is to decide contrary to all experience for the sole purpose of depreciating Christianity. Is there, moreover, anything in the character of St. Paul, after he became a Christian, that can warrant this imputation of fanatical derangement? Is a fanatic observant of times and seasons? Does he bend this way and that way in dexterous fluctuation, with the little prejudices and passions of men? The strongest feature of fanaticism is a want of fine perception, an ungovern-

able and monotonous violence, totally unobservant of occasions. But St. Paul at Athens makes no mention of the Gospel, or the new light, or Christ, or his disciples, or Moses, or the Jewish law; he addresses them in a strain of general and exalted eloquence; quotes their own poets in confirmation of his opinions, tells them he was come to make known to them that God whom they ignorantly worshiped, and to show them clearly those attributes which they already adored in dark piety, and revered with unenlightened wonder. See how dexterously he avails himself of the state of parties in the Jewish synagogue; how ably he pushes on the waving faith of Agrippa, how he kindles into seven-fold eloquence, when the hope of reclaiming that illustrious Pagan flashes across his mind. "King Agrippa, believest thou the prophets? I know that thou believest; and Agrippa said, thou almost persuadest me to be a Christian; then said Paul, I would to God, that not only thou, but that all who hear me this day were as I am, saving these bonds."

Here then I will stop, and recapitulating the plain story that has been told, make a stand for Christianity. At the first appearance of this religion, St. Paul declares himself its enemy, and becomes the bitter persecutor of its converts; he solicits and obtains permission from the high priest to root it out; he, on a sudden, declares his belief in this heresy, fairly tells the Jews he has been converted by a miracle; not only believes but ardently propagates it; and in the course of his religious labours, exposes himself to every possible danger and difficulty that human nature can encounter. The inferences to be drawn from this plain history, are these, that that man cannot be insincere who has suffered evils worse than death for what he believes to be the truth; who by a life of pain and wandering, of anguish and labour, has borne witness to the integrity of his faith; that that man cannot be a weak man who has carried the arts of successful persuasion through barbarous and through civilized men, and extorted from Pagan pride, and Pagan power, such splendid evidence of his cogent arguments, and also imposing eloquence. He is then a good man, and a wise man; and as he is, let him not plead and suffer in vain: let not his long labour, and his illustrious life be lost upon us; let us finish what Agrippa began,—our conviction,—and when he reasons of temperance, and righteousness, and judgment to come, let us do more than Felix, not *only* tremble, but tremble and repent.

SERMON XXVI.

ON TEMPTATION.

PART I.

Then was Jesus led up of the spirit into the wilderness, to be tempted of the devil.—MATTHEW IV. VERSE 1.

IN this season of the year, when we are reminded of our Saviour's miraculous temptation, it is highly expedient that we should consider those perils to which we are exposed by the great deceiver of mankind; who offers to us also all the pleasures and glories of the world, if we will forget the Lord our God, and fall down to the worship of the powers of darkness. Day and night man is tempted from the path of his salvation; and on each side stand alluring pleasures, inviting him to destruction. There are lust, avarice, and ambition; the great sin of intemperance; deep servitude to this world; timid apostasy, that corrupted the soul of Peter; revenge, that shed the blood of Abel; cruelty, that sharpened the sword of Herod; falsehood by which Ananias fell; treachery, that nailed Jesus to the cross. The soul is assailed by all these powers of darkness, and no man will ever see God, who has not clad himself in the armour of righteousness, and walked unhurt through them all to the mountain of Calvary; to finish his race at that goal, to breathe his last at the feet of Christ.

Let him among us, (say the Scriptures,) who would avoid temptation, think meanly and humbly of himself. The danger that is to be averted, must be well known, and rationally apprehended, or it will come in double terror. No confidence, I beseech you, in the strength of resolutions, in the solemnity of vows, in the force and freshness of repent-

ance;—the wind scatters chaff, the waves toss down mounds of sand; passion sweeps before it the oaths, the protestations, the resolves of men, and breaks in pieces the slender fabrics of his soul. Before temptation, we are more than angels; have I not, (the sinner says,) mourned for my fault? am I not weary of the bondage of this sin? is it possible that I shall be tempted once more, that I shall forget all that suffering has taught me, all that I have learnt from dejection and self-reproach? Alas! a word, a sound, a sight will melt all this new wisdom into air, and hurry us back to the same station of sin; again we shall resolve, again feel boldness and pride; again learn the weakness of man's nature, again know the strength of sin, and again feel the bitterness of repentance.

There is a degree of fear, however, which leads to despair; our notions of the power of sin may be so excessive as to make all resistance appear hopeless; but the holy fear, of which I am speaking, is that which is opposed to rash confidence; a fear mingled with so much hope, that it excites activity, and does not confound judgment; a fear which discovers the whole extent of the danger, without magnifying it more than reality; and distrusts the means of opposing sin, without distrusting them more than they ought to be distrusted; distrusts them when unaided by grace, when unfounded on religion, when unblest by God, when purely, and entirely human; but when connected with heaven, when sanctified and hallowed, and touched by Christ, then sees their dignity and glory; and knows they have strength to trample on every lust and passion of the flesh.

Confidence is the great auxiliary of temptation; if we say that we have no sin, we perpetually deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. Profound Christian humility is the only safeguard of virtue. "I dare not so much as lift up my eyes to that allurement; I dare not confide it to my thoughts; I will flee from it into the bosom of the deep, and into the nethermost parts of the world; if God save me not, I am lost, for of myself I can do nothing—and my portion is sin;"—so think the just; thus do they cry unto God in their prayers, and in this way, by fear and trembling, are they saved.

I beg you to observe, that in speaking of this timid apprehension of the perils of temptation, I speak rather of the

beginning of righteousness than of its very advanced and mature state; the time at length comes, when the force of temptation is diminished, and the power of resistance increased; and this fact is one of the strongest incitements to resist temptation, that the difficulty and the struggle become every day less intense, till righteousness and evangelical purity appear to be almost habitual; we see in the perils of the flesh, that which we have before encountered and subdued; we remember the former protection of Heaven; we resume the same confidence in Christ; we put up the same prayer: we receive for our aid the same emanations of the divine grace;—there dwell within us a constant courage, founded upon experience of the efficacy of grace, a proneness to trust in God, a cheerful and invincible hope. "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; thy rod and thy staff shall comfort me."

At first, every passion of the flesh seems irresistible; if we are tempted by anger, we do not perceive how it is possible to remain serene; if the sweetness of revenge invites us, then it is not in our nature to forgive; but the true servant of Christ, who has begun this good exercise, who has often prayed against temptation, and praying often subdued it; who has carried the old man forth to funeral, with the solemn tears of repentance, and buried him in the grave of Jesus, and put on the new man, a new heart, a new understanding, new affections, and excellent appetites of Heaven; he can be tempted by anger, and remain in peace; he can be injured, and forgive; he can look upon intemperance, and be frugal; he can witness successful violence, and be just; beauty to him is marble, riches dross, power vanity, ambition toil; the freedom of righteousness and the law of Christ are to him all in all; for these he has vanquished every temptation, broken asunder the massive chains of sin, and walks henceforward with God, in perfect freedom, and with joyful hope.

There is a practice which, for the resistance of temptation, cannot be too much inculcated, and that is the practice of seeing things in their true nature, and calling them by their right names. If we serve Mammon instead of God, we must abide the consequences of that faith we have espoused; but do not let us call those things of Heaven which belong to Mammon, or those things of Mammon which belong to God; if an action is sinful, and unchristian, at least convince yourself that it *is* sinful, and call it by the name of sin;—if you are led away by temptation to do that which is injurious to

temporal and eternal welfare, state the fact to your own understanding in the truest colours, and the plainest words; it is your only chance of recovery, your only hope of returning to the true shepherd of your souls; if we use the language of the world, if we cast a veil over the eye of piety, if with accommodating phrases and plausible pretexts, we seek to call that righteousness which is sin; to say that is innocent which the warning voice of our Saviour has forbidden; we are then doomed to hopeless destruction, and not to perish eternally becomes impossible.

If this plain dealing with ourselves deprives us of any comfort at all, it is of a very ambiguous, and imperfect comfort; we may set conscience to sleep, but the sleep of conscience is never sound; she seems to sleep in agony, and in pain; and often starts up in wildness and distrust; the deception which a sinner practices upon himself, is but an half deception, a rude and unskilful art; he is perpetually reviewing, and appealing from his own decisions, and sees dimly and distantly the fraud which he has exercised upon his soul, without daring to throw upon it the meridian light of truth; we may deceive ourselves enough to insure the commission of sin, but not enough to acquire the comforts of righteousness;—in cultivating this inward sincerity, we give up a system of fraud, the peril of which is immeasurable, and in the consolation of which it is not wise to place a moment of firm dependence; it is not possible to combine together the pleasures of sin and the quiet of righteousness; but if we are wicked, we must be miserable.

Then there must be no treaty entered into with the tempter; no parley, no doubt, no lingering explanation, but clear denial, indicating calm and invincible resistance; for in this way the souls of men are lost to salvation; it seems innocent to listen, it is no crime to hear what the thing is; I can always deny, I can always retreat; I am still master of my own actions. But this is an error, for you cannot deny or retreat, but at the first pause you were lost, and sin and death marked you for their own; it is madness to combat with the eloquence of sin, or to gaze at the pictures of passion; if you dispute with pleasure she will first charm you to silence, then reason you to conviction, then lead you utterly from God; she wants you only to hear and see; she requires only one moment's pause; she knows if you can balance for a point of time, between her present rapture and the distant felicity of Heaven, that you are quite gone; you must meet tempta-

tion with blind eyes and deaf ears, and with a heart which no more balances whether it shall be virtuous, than it does whether it shall send the blood of life through all the extremities and the channels of the bodily frame.

One of the great instruments for withstanding temptation, and changing our whole nature into a state of grace, is a firm belief in, and perfect assent to the promises of the Gospel, for holy Scripture speaks great word concerning faith. It quenches the fiery darts of the devil, saith St. Paul: it overcomes the world, saith St. John; it is obedience, it is humility, it is a shield, a breast-plate, a mystery; by faith God is pleased; by faith we are sanctified; by faith we are saved; by it our prayers shall prevail for the sick; by it all the miracles of the church have been done; it gives great patience to suffer; it inspires mighty confidence to hope; it communicates strength to perform; it imparts infallible certainty to enjoy; but then it is not, we must observe, a notion or opinion situated finally in the understanding, but a principle productive of holy life; not only a believing in the propositions of Scripture, as we believe a proposition in science, for which we are neither the better nor the worse, but a belief of things so great, that no man who can think and choose, who can desire and act towards a definite object that can possibly neglect them; this faith which justifies the faithful, confirms the just and crowns the martyr; this faith it is, which, placing us above the temptations of the world, will make heaven the end of our desires; God, the object of our worship; the Scriptures the rule of our actions; and the Holy Spirit our mighty counsellor and assistant.

Faith in Christ, such as I have described it to be, is, above all things, likely to afford to us the comfort of general rules; to give to the inward mind the benefit of good laws firmly administered, the comfort of planning a wise system, and pursuing it steadily, for the misery of yielding incessantly to temptation is, that we live upon no plan, and to no certainty; we do not advance to a point, but wander to and fro, ignorant to-day whether we are to be good or bad to-morrow; whether we are to crawl in the dust of this world or to act with the purity of an angel; but is it not mean and degrading to say, I shall spend this day rationally and piously if I am spared by all the lusts of the flesh; but if I am tempted by any appetite, or goaded by any passion, my piety will be dissipated, and my reason destroyed; whether I am the servant of righte-

ousness or the child of sin, depends upon the accidents of the hour, upon whom I see, and what I hear, and upon all that comes in contact with me. I take from every passing event those inward principles, though I ought, with my inward principles, to impart their character and complexion to all the events of life.

The general rule which guards us against temptation, must be laid down, and in time it will come to be regarded on its own account; many things, in themselves innocent, will be avoided on account of their influence upon the rule; many things which might be omitted, will be done for its preservation; what we love long for its utility, we love at last for itself; the rule which has often guarded us from sin, which has saved us from the shame of inconsistency and relapse, becomes at last sanctified and enshrined in our minds; we guard it with jealousies, we encompass it about with nice feelings, we watch it with lively apprehensions, we remove from it all distant harm and contingent inconvenience; we love it, and glory in it, and preserve it, as the children of Israel preserved the ark, and the seraphim kept the gates of Paradise.

But above all things, however often we may be tempted, and however we may yield to temptation, we must beware of despair; we must never cease to resist, never believe that God has made the appetites of the body irresistible, and swim down at once in the full torrent of sin from a conviction that it cannot be stemmed. For every temptation with which we can be tempted in this world, in whatever shape of allurement it may come, there is a power within, given to us by Almighty God, greater and mightier than the temptation; we have reason to discern between evil and good; we can look forward and discern that good and evil in remote periods of time; we have freedom to resolve; we have revelation to teach us what to resolve; we have laudable pride to animate us in guarding that resolve; we have shame to prevent us from its infringement, and we have the grace of God and his protecting spirit to sanctify all the good that we intend. Therefore, we will begin; the terror of sin will be lessened, its triumphs deadened, and its strength withered away; success will be remembered; one victory will ensure another; we shall meet temptation, accustomed to overcome it, with the full and certain conviction, that the Saviour of mankind never deserts the humble and contrite spirit, that, in the hour of peril, pours forth his fervent prayer to him.

SERMON XXVII.

ON TEMPTATION.

PART II.

Then was Jesus led up of the spirit into the wilderness, to be tempted of the devil.—MATTHEW IV. VERSE 1.

In my last discourse upon this subject, I took occasion, from some preliminary observations upon the miraculous temptation of our blessed Saviour, to introduce and discuss the subject of temptation, considering it to be a subject peculiarly well adapted to the sacred season of the year at which we are arrived, a season, which it has ever been the practice of the church, in all ages, to observe with peculiar solemnity, and to dedicate to the examination of subjects intimately connected with the salvation of mankind. I found it impossible to do justice to so extensive a topic of religion in the compass of a single discourse, and therefore, with the good leave and permission of my congregation, I will now proceed with my observations and conclude them. I shall first go on to specify those general habits of mind which are eminently useful for the withstanding of temptation.

I have before stated, how very important towards this object is an attachment to general rules, but these general rules, in order to be kept, must be moderate; they must contain all that the Gospel requires, but no more than the Gospel requires; they ought by no means to exclude the innocent pleasures of life, or to throw an air of crime over any system of actions which our blessed Saviour, as wise as he was holy, has left open to the tastes and inclinations of mankind. There are some men who, with the best possible intentions, would diminish, to the narrowest circle, the extent of human

enjoyments, and drive their fellow-creatures to the contemplation of another world, by rendering this as tasteless and uninteresting as possible. These lessons of severity are the mere inventions of man, not the wisdom of God; we hear them from mistaken zeal; we do not read them in the Gospel; innocent pleasure is, on the contrary, a very great security against sinful pleasure. By taking that good which Almighty God, in his benevolence, has allowed us, we do not feel deprived of everything; we are often encouraged to stop there by dint of exertion, often content to stop there without any exertion at all; but when we deny ourselves those gratifications we may righteously enjoy, we become weary of exaggerated duties, and listen to the seductions of the tempter from finding the burthen of false righteousness greater than we have strength to endure; in seeking to be more than righteous, we become less and are plunged into real sin, because we are too scrupulous to avail ourselves of permitted enjoyment. I speak this against rash vows, overstrained and heated resolutions, needless self-affliction, dread of happiness and all that innumerable train of evils, which false notions of religion entail upon mankind. God asks not of us such sacrifices as these; they have no grateful smell before him, he rejects them as he rejected the offerings of Cain; but the great enemy of us all wishes to see this, and loves it, and knows when he can make a man believe that God is one thing, and happiness another, that the soul of that man is his own, that the angels have lamented over him in Heaven, that he is lost to Christ. Here am I placed (a man says), in this dull servitude, dead to all joy, combating forever with my soul, goaded by appetites which I must not gratify, surrounded with pleasures which I must not approach, restrained by commandments too rigorous for the infirmities of my nature, the member of a religion which overwhelms me with present misery, and promises me future pleasure; the inhabitant of a world, in which I am placed only to be allured and to be denied. All these feelings are the offspring of a false and overacted severity, and the parents of the foulest and most abominable sin. What our Saviour instructs us to do is arduous, not impossible; but it is very easy for human errors to render it impossible; then cry up to Heaven, to blame God, to say it is too much, to take up the wages of sin and to perish eternally.

It will diminish our extravagant notions of the strength of

temptation, by observing that we are all proof against some temptations, and that these some are all different; intemperance is your sin and it is irresistible; you cannot conceive how such allurements can be withstood, but you are not subject to gusts of passion and can command yourself upon the fiercest provocation; another man is a slave to irascible feelings and a master of sensual appetites; this person is tempted by depraved ambition, and wholly exempted from every taint of avarice; the next would live cheerfully in obscurity and is only desirous of accumulating wealth. It is quite certain that you find many temptations easy to be overcome, which to others are highly formidable; that others find those wholly insignificant, which are formidable to you; all sin, then, may be overcome by the grace of Heaven and by the good principles of our nature; there is no one temptation so strong but that you may see it in the minds of some men completely subdued and utterly disregarded; there is no vice which must necessarily and certainly subdue religious firmness; but the event depends upon how much we struggle and how long; we may obey or command, we may live in the bondage of Satan or the freedom of God.

It is a great matter, also, in temptation, not only to gather the powers of our minds for resistance from the daily and common evidence which our nature affords; but to search diligently the Scriptures for the many examples of chosen men, who, placed in situations of mortal peril, have kept their souls in all purity, spotless, untempted and above the world. The fear of death could not keep Daniel from his worship, nor stop Paul from his way to Jerusalem, nor tempt the weary David to drink of the water, nor cause Shadrack to fall down to the idol. Every apostle was tempted to deny his crucified Saviour, tempted by perils of sea and land, by the weariness of journeying, by the cruelty of barbarous people, among whom they sojourned, by monstrous and unheard-of torments; we deem that we are soon arrived at the extremities of our nature; we can neither bear ridicule, nor look at terror, nor defy pleasure; but there are men upon record who shame us out of these narrow limits, and teach us the true bounds and dimensions of our nature; who have acted decently in the midst of every pleasure, who have acted bravely in the midst of every danger, and with inflexible duty to God, in the midst of ridicule, outrage and scorn. These men are our masters and our examples; upon their model we must form ourselves

in the great work of pleasing God and saving our souls from the destruction of sin.

Much of our success in this great warfare depends upon the general views we take of the temptations to which we are exposed; temptations must by no means be considered as needless difficulties; there are other views of this matter which are the true and just views; if any man will show in the Gospel any one prohibition to any one action, which action is neither injurious to him who does it nor to any one else; then it may be allowed that temptation is an unnecessary hardship; but otherwise it is plain that we are only forbidden to do what it should be injurious to us to do; and, therefore, the first rule is to connect together resistance of temptation with increase of happiness; to perceive that we are only enlarging our conceptions of enjoyment by resisting temptation and not pleasing ourselves for the moment that is passing by at the expense of the years that are to come.

The next rule is not only to connect resistance of temptation with happiness, but to connect it with immortal glory, to consider it as a mean of distinction, an occasion of doing something more difficult and meritorious than any other thing in the whole world. There are many laws of the Gospel which prohibit religious pride; but none which prohibit religious ambition; it is not lawful to glory that we are better than other men; but it is quite lawful, it is quite right, it is quite evangelical to strive to become so: no man strives too hard to outvie others in extirpating from his soul the seeds of corruption, in mastering his own nature, and in sacrificing to God his beloved sins; no hope is too eager for this, no industry too perfect, no dedication of time and understanding too absorbing, too exclusive and too entire.

It is quite certain, also, that after the first efforts of temptation are overcome, the occupation of bending our minds to religious obedience, of subjugating our inclinations and actions to the dictates of our reason, may be rendered the most interesting of all human occupations, as it is certainly the most important. It is ever to be remembered, in reflecting on these matters, that there is an intimate connection between virtues and between vices; that one virtue fairly established in the character, will probably introduce many others, that one sin corrupting our nature, will generate and nourish many other principles of corruption; so that in conquering and completely subduing any species of temptation, we gain a double blessing and we avoid a double curse, for in freeing ourselves of

the sin, we not only are clear of that sin but clear of others, which would have connected themselves with it; and in gaining the opposite virtue we gain other virtues associated with it. He who withstands the sin of avarice, withstands the temptation to hardness of heart and callous indifference to human misfortune; he who has all his bodily appetites in perfect command, gains sweetness of disposition, a love of order and an habit of self-command, which may conduct him to every sublimity of active and passive righteousness and make him the chosen servant of Christ. This last observation is addressed particularly to those who imagine they can indulge in any one fault and stop there; that they can atone for indulgence in a darling vice by abstaining from others for which they have less inclination; in the first place this is a mere mockery of God, that an epicure may give himself up to sensuality, if he keeps clear of ambition; or a meek man sacrifice his pride and console himself by fraud and falsehood; but if it were no offence against religion, it would not be possible to gratify any one single sin and keep ourselves clear from others; it is so deadly to live in a state of disobedience to the Gospel, to know that you do so and to continue to do so, that there is no evil and no combination of evils which may not be expected from it; if any man sees in his soul one speck of death and decay, and does not rush to stop it with all the resources of healing righteousness, it will become more dark and more deep at every moment; it will spread over all his counsels, it will blacken all his thoughts, it will put on the genuine signs and characteristics of hell, and cut him off for ever from the mercy of God.

If this affinity and connection of sins make temptation so terrible, if, for these reasons, it is so difficult to confine ourselves to any one error, still more difficult is it to proceed to a certain length in any one sin and to stop there; to say thus far will I be tempted, and no farther; and when I have sinned up to a particular point, I will then put on the spirit of righteousness and resist; in truth, the delicate and graduated softness of doing wrong is not to be resisted; when the first step is made, the descent is so easy, the intervals so gentle, the accommodation so happy, the contrivance so exquisite, that we are far advanced down before we are thoroughly aware of having begun; there is in fact but one spot where any effectual resistance is ever made, and that is at the very beginning; if we give way there, it is quite certain from the common

experience of life, that we can rarely or ever return; and this first step of sin is not what we commonly suppose it to be, action, but thought; nothing which outwardly appears, but something which inwardly disposes; what we are to beware of in avoiding temptation is, (as our blessed Saviour tells us,) the adultery of the heart, the revenge of the heart, the malice of the heart. The beauty of the Christian religion is, that it does not wait for sin till it is strong and flourishing, but roots it up just as the seed is bursting into its pernicious life; it carries the order and discipline of heaven into our very fancies and conception, and by hallowing the first shadowy notions of our minds from which actions spring, makes our actions themselves good and holy.

Prayer in all temptation is ever to be resorted to, for it is much to be believed, that the prayers of men, humbly and honestly asking of their Creator the means of doing well, are heard favourably, granted abundantly, and remembered eternally.

I have thus, to the best of my abilities and from the humble hope of doing good in this and the preceding discourse, passed through the subject of temptation, and I conclude, by reminding you of what that season is in which I have brought this subject before you; a season in which the anniversary of our Saviour's death is now nigh at hand; the death of him who lived for our instruction and happiness, who expired for our salvation, and who bequeathed to us, at his death, a Gospel, which has diffused more gentleness, more goodness, more real happiness among mankind, than the united wisdom of the wisest sages could ever conceive before him; in addition, therefore, to all other motives for resisting temptation, we have this,—not to render vain that death and that crucifixion; and after the greatest of all beings has done so much for us, not to cast away his mercy and frustrate his divine goodness, by ceasing diligently to labour for our own salvation.

SERMON XXVIII.

FOR THE HUMANE SOCIETY.

And now I exhort you to be of good cheer, for there shall be no loss of any man's life among you.—Acts xxvii. verse 22.

*I consider myself as fortunate that it has fallen to my lot to recommend, from the pulpit, the establishment of an humane society in this neighbourhood for the preservation of life; because, as I am sure from the benefits it will confer, that it must be long remembered and zealously supported, I cannot but be pleased to connect myself, however humbly and distantly, with that which I believe will impart happiness and security to so many human beings.

I dare say there are few here present who are unacquainted with the great progress which has been lately made in the art of recovering persons apparently dead; it appears from the reports of the society established in London, that men have been restored to life nearly an hour after every sign of animation had disappeared, and after they had been given up by common observers as completely dead; it appears, also, by the records of the same society, that under their exertions and by the means they have recommended, more than three thousand persons have already been restored to life whose preservation, but for the skill diffused by the society, would have been considered as impossible. It is of the greatest importance to remember this, because it shows the enormous extent of those accidents which are fatal to life, and the high degree of perfection to which this art of resuscitation is already carried

* This sermon was preached at Watford, to recommend the institution of an Humane Society, rendered expedient by some very dreadful accidents which had recently occurred there.

—four thousand human beings rescued from sudden death. Let any man of common humanity reflect upon the rapturous happiness which this mercy has excited; the tears which it has dried up; the broken hearts which it has healed; the tender relations of life which it has restored; the dreadful thoughts of everlasting separation which it has spared; think of this, and there is not a man whose heart and whose understanding would not urge him to take part in so noble and interesting a charity. Four thousand human beings won, with labour and difficulty, from the grave; an hour of war would have overwhelmed twice their number, so easy it is to destroy, so difficult to save; God be thanked that this latter is our task; that while all Europe is again rushing into arms, we are met together in the name of Christ to see how we can increase the security of life and diminish the victory of the grave.

We may consider such sort of institutions as the sure signs of the prevalence of good laws, sound morals, and of a general state of prosperity; it is not so much an object that there should be many people, as that those who are, should exist in the greatest attainable comfort, and be exposed to the least possible degree of peril and disturbance. In a savage state man is so often destroyed by the sudden excesses of passion, and subjected to destruction from so many causes, that life is there of less consequence, and men never think of entering into any schemes for its preservation. In poor countries no institutions of charity can flourish; the attention of mankind cannot rise above their daily wants; and though life may be respected by their habits and laws, they cannot make any considerable sacrifices for its preservation. In despotic countries it is not life in general which is of importance, but only the life of the rich and great; there are countries even in Europe where a plan for saving the lives of the lowest classes of society would carry with it an air of ridicule and hyperbole. Such kind of institutions can only exist in a country where a just administration of just laws has made the life of man of supreme importance; they can only take place in a country where the Christianity in its best form is universally diffused; they can only take place in a country which industry has raised above the common wants of life and which can afford to be munificent in its goodness; such an attention to human life is the united result of piety, of justice, and of opulence.

This scheme of benevolence has also a peculiar interest as it connects itself with a knowledge of the human frame, and of the most important laws by which it is regulated. Let no man think that knowledge ever can be impious, or that it has any other limits but the limits of possibility; whatever secrets of nature man can discover, he is permitted to discover; whatever could not be entrusted to him, is placed beyond his reach; his efforts may be fruitless, but they cannot be criminal; for it is only by experience he can find out those boundaries which Providence has fixed and those rewards which it has assigned to his labours. It may happen, then, that the science which this charity patronizes may be yet in its infancy; that it may have new resources for the calamities of life; fresh consolation for the bitterness of grief; that it may go as far beyond the present art of resuscitation as that art exceeds what was believed to be possible in the times which preceded its invention.

It must be remembered, too, whatever be the degree to which this art is carried that the institution of an humane society in this neighbourhood secures the practice of that art in its utmost present perfection; in case of any dangerous accident you can command all the resources which mechanical or medical aid can supply; and really I cannot well conceive what an unhappy man can hereafter say to his heart, who, when such a mean of obviating some of the greatest calamities of life is placed before him; when it is insisted upon and earnestly pressed upon his attention, hears it with indifference, or rejects it as frivolous or insignificant. Can any person here present who may think the object upon which I am employed to be trifling and inadequate? can any man pretend to say, before another Sunday summons him to church, that he may not be crying over the dead body of his child; and lifting up from the ground its poor miserable mother? and if a man has no children of his own, still is there such a feeling in the world to bring back a child to its parents, to say, I took it up when it was breathless, I never quitted it till life came back; I laboured for the sake of God and for pity, and there is the child yet living? I come here to awaken in you such thoughts as these, to be the humble instrument of good to you and yours; it is not for any distant objects that I appeal to your compassion, but for the interests of this place and this people; for scenes which you all may witness, for misfortunes to which you are all exposed.

Every man who has not beheld such scenes as those to which I have alluded, is apt to wonder why they are insisted upon so eagerly, and felt so much; but those who have seen them wonder that they are not felt more. I have been twice present at the process of resuscitation, and I cannot wish that any person should purchase his feelings of compassion at so dear a rate. I shall not attempt to describe such scenes, but one circumstance no time will ever efface from my mind; the frantic grief of the mother was not so affecting because it was dreadful and alarming; but when the first symptom of returning life appeared, I saw her, a poor labouring woman, kneeling with her hands clasped close to the reviving infant; breathing as her child breathed, growing red and growing pale with it; praying, hoping, fearing with her looks, and gazing immovably on him till the poor lad rose up and knew his mother once more? Why did we all labour for this wretched woman, who had scarcely clothes to cover her or bread to eat? we did it without thought or reflection, because we found ourselves irresistibly called upon to make such an exertion; and so are you called upon to minister to such anguish, to prevent such misery, to lighten that load of sorrow which presses down the heart of man in the sad journey of life.

Man is not discontented to part with those whom he loves in old age; when the fair career of life is run he feels such losses; but he knows they are the inevitable laws of nature, the condition upon which he lives; he knows this, and such an habitual style of thinking brings his affliction within the limits of reason; it operates, too, as some diminution of wretchedness where there has been a previous warning, and a gradual diminution of hope as in a long illness; but there is no heart strong enough to support the sudden loss of kindred and of children. "It was only an hour ago that I was playing with my child; and when I came back I saw the hope and pride of my life lying dead and breathless upon the ground." It is too much for man to bear; it is the bitterest dreg in the cup of God's wrath; a man may live after it; but I defy him to taste of happiness ever again, or to know what is meant by tranquillity and peace.

It is a subject of great delicacy to touch upon; but let it be remembered, we concern ourselves, not only with the consequences of accidental, but of intentional death; we stop the impious temerity of the suicide; we call back to life, to duty,

to shame the man who is retiring from the world before God and nature summon him away? We keep back a spirit from the torments of hell; we seize upon the first dawnings of returning reason, to teach him that he must never abandon his confidence in Heaven. We spare to wretched women and children, a spectacle of infamy and horror; we give back a son to parents, a parent to children, a citizen to the state, a repentant man to all the duties, charities and relations of life; it is astonishing that any wise and reflecting mind should attempt to underrate the grievous sin of suicide;—putting aside all higher considerations, what sort of doctrine does it tend to inculcate? "It is of no sort of importance to me, to labour slowly and systematically, to establish a reputation in the world; I will eat and drink, for to-morrow I can die; I will plunder, dissipate and destroy; and when the vengeance of mankind is falling too heavily upon me, the remedy is in my own hands; he who is careless of his own life, has nothing to fear from any human being." It is not only this style of thinking and acting which is to be apprehended from the frequency of suicide; but no man stands insulated from the world, no man can dispose of his own life, without affecting, in the deepest manner, the happiness of many other human beings, who have acquired certain rights over every important action of his life. I pass over, at present, the religious offence; I speak only of the alarm, the agony, the disturbance, the universal horror, which such a crime occasions, if we diminish (as we do most clearly diminish), all this train of evils; then, surely, upon every plea of reason and feeling, upon every principle of the Gospel, is our society entitled to your protection and support.

There is something in the very idea of the art of reviving the apparently dead, which cannot fail to inspire the feelings of solemnity and religion. Is there life yet in the body, or is the soul of this man gone to render account of the good and the evil it has done at the judgment seat of God? Is it merely perishable matter with which we are occupied, that to-morrow will be laid in its grave? or will it once more be informed by a reasonable soul and agitated by passions? are the days of his years come to an end, or will he remain to act a valuable and important part upon the theatre of the world? then what is this life, which we are calling back with such eager and incessant care? whence comes it? how went it away?—what is it? The flesh is not life, nor the blood, nor

the complicated system of nerves; the eye cannot see it, nor can it be subjected to any sense, nor has reason explained and defined it; it is a thought which baffles inquiry, inspires terror, teaches wisdom, humbles the most aspiring being, by telling him that there is a Creator, a master; and then, too, a punisher above.

You see before you, too, on such occasions, and see with no common interest, a man who has tasted of death; who has been subjected to that agony which we all must feel, and exposed to that peril which we all at last must meet; how natural to ask, "What were your feelings at such a moment? In what shape, in what array, with what host of terrors, with what new and stupendous machinery of feelings, does death come? What is it at which we all recoil with so much horror, and which we learn, from our earliest youth, to consider as the great bane of human happiness?" But upon such points as these, the veil of nature cannot be penetrated, nor can living beings know the dreadful mysteries beyond the grave; this we know, however, from the universal assurance of all who have been exposed to this anticipation of death, that their last recollections have been the mercy and protection of God; that they descended, as they thought, to death, calling on his name, and supplicating his forgiveness; that this was the last notion with which they seemed to resign the world. And so it always is with us all; religion is natural and necessary to the heart of man; where else can that being seek for succour, who is in death, in the midst of life? what other hope, in the perils of land, or water; on the bed of sickness; in the hour of death; in the day of judgment? Do not mind what the ministers of religion say, but in all the stupendous events of life, if you find men falling back upon religion, not only as their greatest, but as their only consolation; if those, who have thought themselves perishing in secret, tell you that at that dread moment, it was the rod and staff upon which they leant; this is one of those powerful and unprepared evidences in favour of religion, which outweighs all that eloquence and argument can produce.

I am afraid, that I have already extended what I have to say to an improper length, but I am most anxious to succeed in my object, and to prevent a repetition of those melancholy scenes which have given to us all so much pain; think what it is to save one father for his children; to rescue one

child from untimely death; to diminish so much alarm; to diffuse so much heartfelt joy; to place under the control of skill and prudence some of the bitterest calamities of the world. God knows how often the life of man has been cast away; the little account that has been made of it in all the great changes and revolutions of the world; the millions which have perished for some object which they did not comprehend, and by which they could not benefit; it is delightful to think, amid all the works of bad ambition, amid all the groans and bleedings of the earth, that in some little part of the world, at least, men are occupied with the preservation of life; that there are some human beings, who can derive the highest gratification in restoring to those who love him the lowest and poorest of mankind. These thoughts are pleasant and refreshing; they do honour to those with whom they originated; I am sure they must produce the happiest effects in this neighbourhood; and I sincerely implore the blessing of Almighty God upon so wise, so humane, and so Christian an undertaking.

SERMON XXIX.

ON THE EFFECTS WHICH CHRISTIANITY OUGHT TO PRODUCE UPON MANNERS.

The fruits of the spirit are love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, &c.—GALATIANS v. VERSE 25.

IN this epistle to the Galatians, as in many parts of his writings, St. Paul distinguishes between the works of the flesh and of the spirit; meaning by the first, the gratification of those bad appetites and passions incidental to our nature; and by the last, those virtues which we are taught by the Christian religion.

The catalogue of natural vices exhibits a true and disgusting picture of man untaught and unpurified by his Creator. The works of the flesh, says he, are hatred, variance, strife, wrath, emulations, envyings and seditions. But the Christian religion teaches another mind; the fruits of that spirit it would inculcate are love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness and goodness. In this manner, the general scope of Christianity is pointed out in a few words, and a test afforded us by which we may estimate our progress in religion.

We say, in our language, to seize on the spirit of a thing: we talk of the spirit of our political constitution, of the spirit of our civil and criminal law; and we seem to mean by the expressions, those few leading principles which uniformly pervade these respective codes, and give them consistency of character; in this sense the apostle unfolds to us the spirit of Christianity, the object and tendency of all its laws; they are instituted to increase love and affection amongst mankind; to make us happy, to diffuse peace, to inculcate mutual forbearance, gentleness, goodness and meekness.

The fruits of the spirit are love.—By love the apostle means philanthropy, the general love of our fellow-creatures, a passion dwelling more often on the lip than in the heart, and rather a theme on which we declaim, than a motive from which we act. The mass of us who are called Christians do not hate our fellow-creatures, but we do not love them. Misanthropy is a compound of ill-temper, disappointment and folly, which does not often occur. But most men are indifferent to that part of the species which is out of the pale of their own private acquaintance; the cry of public wretchedness never reaches them; they never seek for hidden misery; they shrink from that courageous benevolence which wades through mockery, and contempt, and horror, to curb the infamous with laws, and comfort the poor with bread; and when the rain and the tempest blacken the earth, they gather round their comforts within; and make fast the bars of their gate against the crying Lazarus, and leave his sores to the dogs, and his head to the storm.

Again, nothing can be more dissimilar from the fruits of the spirit than that little indulgence which our mutual faults experience one from the other. The character and conduct of those with whom we live, are not only a very natural but a very necessary object of inquiry; we should live and act in the dark, if we were not to make it so; but the strong tendency to injustice and ill nature is the thing to be corrected. Tear the veil off your heart, and look at it steadily and boldly; for a keener eye than yours shall one day pierce into its darkest chambers. Is there no secret wish to find the imputation true, by which another is degraded? Is there no secret fear that it should be refuted? Do these sentiments never lurk under the affectation of pity and condolence? Have you never concealed those circumstances and considerations which you knew would extenuate the guilt of an absent and an accused person? Have you never sat in the prudent ecstasy of silence, and seen the frame of a good or an eminent man mangled before your eyes? Have you never given credit and circulation to improbable evidence of crime? Have you examined the guilt of your neighbour, as you would examine the guilt of your child, in heaviness of heart and in all the reluctant wretchedness of conviction? Have you never added to evil report? never in a bad hour and with accursed tongue, and with unblushing face, heaped up infamy on a better man than yourself; and spoken that which

was false of the helpless, the good, the wise, or the great? And if you have done it, if it form the daily habit of your life, what title have you to the name of Christian? Or of what right do you call on Jesus, the merciful and the good? Be not deceived; God is never scorned. Think you that he who set at nought the idle sacrifice of the Jews, who would not eat bulls' flesh, or drink the blood of goats, will be mocked with bended knees and uplifted hands? Are we the disciples of Christ because we stand at this prayer, and rise at that, and sanctify the face, and strain at trifles, and fill the temple with the cry of God, God, and Lord, Lord? If these are our notions of religion, we walk on deceitful ashes, which will plunge our bodies in flame. Christ came down from the mercy-seat of God to heal our woes, and minister to our infirmities, to soften the nature of man, and to bend his heart to mercy. If you truly venerate his holy name, walk in that spirit with which he walked on the earth; forgive as you would be forgiven; do unto others as you would they should do unto you; judge your brethren in mercy, be slow to condemn, and swift to forgive; bearing always upon you the fruits of the spirit, peace, long-suffering, gentleness and goodness.

Another cause equally fatal to our progress in Christianity, is that proud contest for superiority, so strongly observable in society.

Few human creatures, indeed, are eminent either for birth, fortune, beauty, learning, or anything on which the world sets a value, without considering such distinctions as a justification of pride in themselves, or the want of it as a mark of degradation in others. The sole object for which they mingle in society, is to display what they possess, and to insinuate what the rest of the world want. Their intercourse with their fellow-creatures is an eternal mixture of ostentation and sarcasm; and they would seem to be certain beings of a superior order, made by some other God, and hoping for a more select salvation. The effect of Christian faith upon daily behaviour is often, indeed, scarcely discernible, if it exists at all; every one is the greatest in his own eyes; our forms of speech only are humble, our hearts are full of disdain, and Christians in this house are mere creatures of the world when they leave it. And yet there is nothing in the humility of a Christian incompatible with the elegance of a gentleman; and that polish of manners on which the world places so great, and

perhaps so merited a value, proceeds chiefly from the indication of qualities, which it is so much the object of the Christian religion to diffuse. A man of graceful behaviour counterfeits humility, throws a veil over his advantages and perfections; he discovers concealed merit, brings it into light, and gives it brilliancy and force.—Nobody has any fault before him; he is in appearance gentle, long-suffering and benevolent. There is hardly any one Christian quality which a man, actuated by the mere vanity of pleasing, does not assume to effect his object. Such oblique evidences in favour of Christianity is not without force, and shows that the disposition of mind which it labours to inculcate, is precisely that which would render human happiness the greatest, by rendering society the most delightful; much more delightful than it ever can be, when we varnish over heart-burnings, jealousies, envyings and seditions, with Christian faces, and more than Christian language.

There must exist in society distinction of rank, as well as difference of natural endowments and attainments the effect of study; but God ordained this inequality amongst mankind for wiser purposes than to minister to the pride of one being, and to wound the spirit of another; the mere knowledge of our superiority is not criminal, and indeed is frequently inevitable. It is the internal pride and contemptuous treatment of others, founded on such consciousness of superiority, which violate a law of the Gospel most frequently repeated, and most clearly explained.

After all take some quiet, sober moment of life, and add together the two ideas of pride and of man; behold him, a creature of a span high, stalking through infinite space in all the grandeur of littleness: Perched on a little speck of the universe, every wind of heaven strikes into his blood the coldness of death; his souls fleets from his body like melody from the string; day and night as dust on the wheel, he is rolled along the heavens, through a labyrinth of worlds, and all the systems and creations of God are flaming above and beneath. Is this a creature to revel in his greatness? Is this a creature to make to himself a crown of glory; to deny his own flesh and blood; and to mock at his fellow sprung from that dust to which they both will soon return? Does the proud man not err? Does he not suffer? Does he not die? When he reasons is he never stopped by difficulties? When he acts is he never tempted by pleasures? When he lives is he

free from pain? When he dies can he escape from the common grave? Pride is not the heritage of man; humility should dwell with frailty, and atone for ignorance, error and imperfection.

It is not merely with gross acts of vice, or with splendid virtues that Christianity is conversant; this is not the true genius and nature of our religion; it descends even to that turn of mind and sentiment which fashions the deportment of man to man; it not only guards society from daring enormities, but would render our lives more happy by endearing cares and engaging attentions; it teaches man to be gentle, and kind to his fellow, to forbear with him, to forgive foibles, to forget injuries, to cheer the lowly with glad words and kind looks. This civil and gracious spirit is, perhaps, the truest test of our progress in Christianity. Every one is subject to occasional fits of generosity, but a humane consideration, a rational indulgence for others, evinced by a constant sweetness of manner, is, perhaps, the most indisputable proof that Christianity has sunk deeply and intimately into the heart. Do not let this seem a frivolous and inadequate object for a Divine lawgiver; it owes its importance to the moral constitution of man. The causes of great happiness and misery rarely occur; little circumstances and events that appear trifling, singly considered, make up the sum of human enjoyment or misery. The retrospect of our past lives will show us that the greatest misfortune we have suffered, is the sum total of useless vexation inflicted on ourselves and others from the want of this Christian restraint upon temper and Christian incitement to benevolence.

Men are more pained by affront than by injury; affront implies the absence of esteem and the presence of contempt; and to gain the one and to avoid the other, seems to be almost the ruling passion of our lives. For wherefore are the greater part of mankind studious of riches, but from the consequence they reflect on their possessor? Of what good are hidden beauty or concealed talent, or secret splendour of descent? All these we covet, as they enable us to move with greater dignity in the world. What is the sting of poverty? not the privation of luxuries, but ridicule and contempt, which men die daily to avoid, because they fear them worse than death. Esteem is the great stake for which we all play: and to show a human being, not rendered infamous from crime, that you de-

spise him, is a cruelty which savours little of that gentle religion we profess or that merciful Redeemer we adore.

The worldly motives to cultivate the fruits of the spirit (though subordinate of course to those of religion), are numerous and strong. The resentment which proceeds from contempt, is as much to be feared as the affection excited by courteous treatment is to be desired and cherished. It is wretched policy to stimulate any human being to a keen inspection of our follies and our faults, for no character can bear the microscopic scrutiny of vindictive anger. Contempt never passes unobserved, is seldom forgiven, and always returned with a rapid accumulation of interest. Everybody makes league against insolence; the misfortunes of an insolent man are a public rejoicing; his vices are exaggerated, his motives falsified, and his virtues forgotten; he must humble himself in dust and ashes, before the world can or will forgive him. Whereas that security which arises from a consciousness of being generally beloved, is the great soother of life and the most delightful sensation that any human being can enjoy. He who affects to despise the verdict, which the great tribunal of the world passes on his life and fame, says that which is not true, or that which is shameful if it be true; the delicacy of our feelings, with regard to public opinion, is extreme. To hear that we have been the subject of conversation in our absence creates a sensation of anxious alarm; we glance instantly at the weak parts of our character, at the offence or the benevolence we have previously awakened in our judges; and our hearts die within us, if we learn that we have been the object of general condemnation; but to reflect that we are beloved as widely as we are known, to think that there are many absent human beings, who bear to us the seeds of good will, kindness and esteem, is a sentiment which cheers the sadness of life; we shall live so as never to lose it; it breathes a grateful tranquillity on the soul; it is a firm barrier against the waves of chance, a lasting, solid happiness, which we bear about us, like strength and health earned by temperance and toil. If ye would then that men should love you, love ye also them; not with gentleness of face alone and the shallow mockery of smiles; but in singleness of heart, in forbearance, judging mercifully, entering into the mind of thy brother, to spare his pains, to prevent his wrath, to be unto him an eternal fountain of peace. These are the fruits of the spirit, and this the soul which

emanates from our sacred religion. If we bear these fruits now in the time of this life; if we write these laws on the tablets of our hearts, so as we not only say but do them, then indeed are we the true servants of Jesus and the children of his redemption. For us he came down from Heaven; for us he was scorned and hated upon earth; for us mangled on the cross; and, at the last day, when the trumpet shall sound, and the earth melt, and the heavens groan and die, we shall spring up from the dust of the grave the ever living spirits of God.

SERMON XXX.

FOR THE SWISS.

The mountains are melted with their blood.—Isaiah xxxiv. verse 3.

With the pleasure which I always feel in addressing you on any subject of charity, may be mingled, perhaps, on this particular occasion some distant sense of national honour and some small share of national pride; for it has ever been the memorable privilege of this island to stand forward as the early and eager champion of all the miseries of man; and though other nations may have fought and may have gained in arms and in arts a name equally glorious with our own, none have ever cherished the wretched stranger as we have done; none have so sheltered the weary exile of other lands; none have ministered with such melting humanity, to aliens in speech and blood, who kneeled before us venerable in misery and pleaded the kindred of misfortune. For when did any people ever fall from their high estate, and there was no one of us to lament them? When was any country ever smitten and afflicted, and we did not lift them up from the dust? What victims of war, of tyranny, and persecution have we ever driven back from our shores? What species of sorrow have we rejected? What shape of misery have we despised?

It is pleasant to hear of the virtues of our country; the good deeds our fathers have done, warm our hearts to mercy; their generation is passed away, and they are all sleeping in their tombs: but as their blood gives us life, so may their noble thoughts yet dwell in the bosoms of their children.

When the poor Palatines presented themselves at the gates of the metropolis, every British heart was roused to a pitch of enthusiasm for their relief. It could not be endured that a sad and motley crowd of men and women should lie on the

bare ground, under the open wintry heaven, begging humbly and piteously for food; they drank of our cup: they were warmed with the fleece of our sheep; the tears of these poor creatures were dried up, and their hearts opened to new prospects of joy.

Not less conspicuous was the charity of this island at that dreadful epoch when the city of Lisbon was overturned by an earthquake, and one dreadful day made of a beautiful metropolis a heap of hideous ruins. It was from the quick and efficacious bounty of the British people, that they experienced the first dawn of relief; the blessings of all ranks of people were showered upon us. King and peasant were melted by our compassion; and wretched mothers that lingered weeping over the stones of the city, which covered the mangled bodies of their children, could spare one prayer to Heaven for their benefactors and their friends.

Why should I remind you of the late unparalleled instance of goodness and generosity shown to the poor French emigrants? a generosity which want and privation of every kind have not been able to relax, or to extinguish. In the midst of a bloody war, carried on by their own countrymen for our destruction, we have expended millions in support of the French who have sought an asylum amongst us; and while the blood of our brothers and our friends has been flowing from the swords of their kindred, they have lived tranquilly amongst us, in the peace of our laws, and the plenty of our land.

Induced by these splendid examples of national feeling, the poor people of Switzerland come tremblingly before you, to beg some small relief in their wretchedness. They come to you, not with the looks of freemen, but in tears, and in chains, naked, hungered, and broken-hearted. The valleys yet ring with their cries, the mountains are wet with their blood; they have been smitten, and slaughtered, and spoiled. Switzerland is begging to Europe for charity!—Switzerland, where the humblest peasant would have blushed to have sought his support, but from the strength of his arm, and the energy of his mind!—Switzerland, which seemed one vast family, ruled by the same spirit of activity!—Switzerland, where simplicity, and peace, and joy, had fled from courts and empires, to dwell in the awful bosom of her eternal mountains.

I cannot but feel some little embarrassment in pressing the

misfortunes of the Swiss upon your notice, when the necessities of your own poor seem to put in so much more imperious a claim to your generosity. But this claim of your own poor, it should be remembered, has been already heard, and allowed; a very large sum has been subscribed for their relief, and a much larger sum would, if it were necessary, be raised with the same facility.

Neither does it follow, that the pittance raised upon this occasion, should be subtracted from your domestic charities. In the present posture of affairs, many good people will be, I am sure, induced to sacrifice somewhat of their amusements, or even of their comforts, to their conviction of the general miseries of Europe; and upon this truly Christian spirit, you must allow me to say, from my present experience of this country, that I place the firmest and most rational reliance. Besides, too, I never will subscribe to that doctrine, which confines the feelings of humanity to the more wealthy and educated classes of mankind. The poor feel acutely for those whose miseries are greater than their own. Suffering as the peasantry are in this melancholy season of scarcity, if it were possible to give them a clear conception of the ancient state of society in Switzerland, of that happiness from which the Swiss have been precipitated, and the abject misery to which they have been reduced, do you think they would grudge to these poor creatures the charity you may extend to them? No! suffering as they are, they would break off a morsel of their bread for the poor Swiss, and would cheerfully add another pang of hunger to the sorrows of their hearts.

Amidst all the enormities of the French Revolution, no one circumstance perhaps has excited such general sympathy and indignation as the fall of Switzerland. With the name of Switzerland have been connected, from our earliest years, all the worthy feelings of the heart, and all the exquisite beauties of nature; all that the eye of taste, or the soul of benevolence could require; a race of brave, and happy, and good men animated her solemn rocks and glens; the climbing step of freedom had scanned the summit of the mountains, the unwearied hand of labour had drawn from the barren rock sustenance for man; the peasant, with his plough, and his sword, and his book, was at once a tiller of the earth, a soldier and a Christian. Happiness never was more complete, imagination could not paint a more enviable lot upon

earth, or could the earth afford it. For six hundred years they had remained firm as their native mountains, amidst all the convulsions of Europe; for two hundred years they had hardly drawn the sword, or never drawn it but to conquer. "They were a chosen land, beloved of God; and while the wrathful hail smote the lands about them, in their fields was no hail seen."

Into these hallowed retreats, in the midst of a solemn truce, in spite of the strict neutrality observed by the Swiss, and the solemn and repeated promises of their own government, burst the common enemies of mankind, hot from the carnage, and reeking with the blood of other nations. They came to no new work of horror; they had murdered other innocents, and pillaged other temples, and wasted other lands. They could dye the silvered hair of the aged man with his own blood; they could curse the tears of women, and dash down the suckling babe as he lifted up his meek eyes for mercy.

In the midst of such horrid scenes as these, many actions of heroic valour characterized the last days of Switzerland; and she died with her face ever turned to the enemy, slowly yielding, and fiercely struggling to the last. In the final battle, fought near the environs of the capital, (fought, as said the French, on their part, for the liberation of the Swiss people,) one hundred and sixty women were left dead upon the field of battle, mangled almost to atoms; still greater numbers perished at Nurenburg, at Laupen, and Lengnau, fighting with madness for all they loved upon earth, and throwing their comely bleeding bodies before their husbands and their children. At Oberland, an old peasant was observed in arms, fighting amidst his three children, and his seven grandchildren; they sustained the combat with inconceivable bravery, calling upon each other by name tenderly; the children thronging about the old man, and guarding with their manly limbs the hoary head of their parent. They were all murdered; and in a moment of time, this valiant race was blotted from the book of living men.

In the midst of all, wherever bravery, and wherever counsel were needed, was their truly great and intrepid leader;* not now, as you might think, in the fullness of strength and youth, but an old man of seventy years of age, who, for half a century, had ruled the affairs of the republic with the utmost

* Steigner.

wisdom and justice, and found himself, at the close of life, when ease and retirement, crowned with honour, are so sweet, combating in the midst of armed peasants, for the existence of his country. He had ever warned the Swiss of the dangers to which they were exposed, but unfortunately in vain. At the moment of actual peril, his age and his infirmities would have allowed him to retire without disgrace; but there are men who are ruled by something within, which they dread more than the judgment of the world. He who had guided his country in the days of her tranquillity, could not forsake her in her troubles. The miseries of Switzerland made her doubly dear to this good man; and, like a true leader of the people, he led them in the day of death and battle. The people are never ignorant who is fit to lead them; they rushed after him like the angel of the living God; and every Swiss peasant, who was stabbed at his feet, cast his lingering eyes on this great man, and when he saw him yet breathing, died in peace.

I ought perhaps to apologize to you for thus occupying your time from the pulpit with the praises of individuals; but I could not let such an occasion pass, without saying a few words on so memorable a man. I paint to you the genius of the people, in showing you the extraordinary characters to which such an epoch gave birth. You see what a nation has been destroyed; you see the full extent of crime, for which the French have become amenable to the whole human race. Besides, too, if at any future time it shall please Almighty God to expose this country to similar perils; if these robbers of the earth are still suffered to mock at all living men, to shiver to pieces crowns and sceptres, and hurl down princes, and potentates, and thrones, and dominations; and if there be in this church any young man, destined by his great talents, to lead the people at such an awful crisis; let him learn from the life of this illustrious leader, to despise every system of temporizing policy, to see that there are times when magnanimity is prudence, when despair is wisdom; like him, ever looking up to God; and guided by the light of beautiful and manly principles, let him move forwards in one even tenour, through all times, and seasons, and circumstances, and events.

The vengeance which the French took of the Swiss for their determined opposition to the invasion of their country, was decisive and terrible. The history of Europe can afford

no parallel of such cruelty. To dark ages, and the most barbarous nations of the east, we must turn for similar scenes of horror, and perhaps must turn in vain. The soldiers dispersed over the country, carried fire, and sword, and robbery into the most tranquil and hidden valleys of Switzerland. From the depth of sweet retreats echoed the shrieks of murdered men, stabbed in their humble dwellings, under the shadow of the high mountains, in the midst of those scenes of nature, which make solemn and pure the secret thoughts of man, and appal him with the majesty of God. The flying peasants saw, in the midst of the night, their cottages, their implements of husbandry, and the hopes of the future year, expiring in one cruel conflagration. The men were shot upon the slightest provocation; innumerable women, after being exposed to the most atrocious indignities, were murdered, and their bodies thrown into the woods. In some instances this conduct was resented; and for symptoms of such an honourable spirit, the beautiful town of Altsdorf was burnt to the ground, and a single house left to show where it had stood. The town of Stantz, a town peculiarly dear to the Swiss, as it gave birth to one of the founders of their liberty, was reduced to a heap of cinders. In this town, in the fourteenth century, a Swiss general surprised, and took prisoner, the Austrian commander who had murdered his father; he forgave him, upon the simple condition of his not serving any more against the Swiss Cantons. When the French got possession of this place, they burnt it to ashes; not in a barbarous age, but now, yesterday, in an age we call philosophical; they burnt it because the inhabitants endeavoured to preserve their liberty. The Swiss was a simple peasant; the French are a mighty people, combined for the regeneration of Europe. Oh, Europe, what dost thou owe to this mighty people? dead bodies, ruinous heaps, broken hearts, waste places, childless mothers, widows, orphans, tears, endless confusion, and unutterable woe. For this mighty nation we have suffered seven years of unexampled wretchedness, a long period of discord, jealousy, privation and horror, which every reflecting man would almost wish blotted out from his existence. By this mighty people the Swiss have lost their country; that country which they loved so well, that if they heard but the simple song of their childhood, tears fell down every manly face, and the hearts of intrepid soldiers sobbed with grief. What, then, is all this

done with impunity? Are the thunders of God dumb? Are there no lightnings in his right hand? Pause a little before you decide on the ways of Providence; tarry and see what will come to pass. There is a solemn and awful courage in the human heart, placed there by God himself, to guard man against the tyranny of his fellows, and while this lives, the world is safe. There slumbers even now, perhaps, upon the mountains of Switzerland, some youthful peasant, unconscious of the soul he bears, that shall lead down these bold people from their rocks to such deeds of courage as they have heard with their ears, and their fathers have declared unto them; to such as were done in their days, and in the old time before them, by those magnanimous rustics, who first taught foolish ambition to respect the wisdom, and the spirit of simple men, righteously and honestly striving for every human blessing.

Let me go on a little further in this dreadful enumeration. More than thirty villages were sacked in the Canton of Berne alone; not only was all the produce of the present year destroyed, but as the cattle unfit for human food were slaughtered, and the agricultural implements burnt, the certainty of famine was entailed upon them for the ensuing year; at the end of all this military execution, civil exactions, still more cruel and oppressive, were begun; and under the forms of government and law, the most unprincipled men gave loose to their avarice and rapacity, till Switzerland has sunk at last under the complication of her misfortunes, reduced to the lowest ebb of misery and despair.

It cannot be necessary, after this narrative, to make any long or urgent appeals to your feelings? If ever the misfortunes of man were a care to you; if ever you have sacrificed any pleasure to lighten the heavy heart; if a wretched face and a wailing voice have ever pierced your soul, and sunk your gayety to the dust, and filled your eyes with tears, have mercy on these poor forsaken people. I do not ask of you much, but give them a little; they have no bread, no shelter, no friends; they feel they have no right to petition you; but they fling themselves down on their knees before you, and beg you, through the Gospel of Jesus Christ, to have pity on them, or they must die. If any one of you had been wandering in their mountains, they would have entreated you kindly and gently; if you had been sick, they would have watched your bed; if you had been weary, they would

have sheltered you in their cabins: if you had been hungry, their very children would have come to share their food with you, and their little faces would have been clouded with sorrow, till the countenance of the poor stranger within their gates was turned to joy. Do not let these men perish; but though you have heard, in these latter days, many a tale of misery, be not wearied with doing good; but taught by that power, which has ever pity on you, learn ye to have pity on them.

The genuine soul of compassion is swift to figure, and to conceive; it glides into the body of the suffering wretch; it writhes with his agony; it faints with his hunger; it weeps with his tears; it bleeds with his blood; till, blind with the wise and heavenly delusion, it ministers to its own fancied sorrows and labours for another self. Forget, then, for a moment that you are living in a free country, in affluent circumstances, and under respected laws; put yourselves in the situation of these poor peasants; you would see your children daily wasting before your eyes, for want of proper food; you would be forced to bear their looks; you would see the little spot where all your affections centered the habitation of your forefathers, the pride of your life, broken down to a desolation and a desert; you would sit down on the ruins; you would remember the happy days of your infancy that you had passed there; you would think your country was no more, your kindred were dead in battle; you would think of all these things, and your heart would break.

My brethren, farewell. I have done. I have said everything in my power for these unhappy people; I have said it with all my heart and soul, for I absolutely believe they are dying from hunger. I humbly crave some little charity for them; I beg you as Christians, as good and kind men, to turn your hearts towards their wretchedness; I beg you, as you hope for mercy from the good and gracious Jesus, as you hope to spend your latter days in peace, as you wish that your children in distant lands should return home to you in good report, and bless your eyes once more before death. If there be here a parent who feels the warning of age, and lingers in heart round his dear family; if there be a child that knows how to cherish the declining age of its parent; by all these hopes, by all these feelings, by all these passions, I solemnly entreat your mercy; and may the God of Heaven, and earth, and man, by teaching you to pity, give you the right to implore.

SERMON XXXI.

ON TOLERATION.

For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, in all the churches.—1 Corinthians xiv. verse 33.

As I intend to avail myself of this occasion to treat of that spirit of religious intolerance which has recently* displayed itself in this country, I am happy to ground my remarks upon this simple and Christian precept, delivered in the writings of St. Paul; that the final end of all religious establishments is, to disseminate peace and happiness among mankind; that nothing can be farther from, or more contrary to, the purposes for which they were created, than to teach men to hate each other on account of their religious opinions: "for God is not the author of confusion, but of peace in all the churches."

It may seem needless to invite attention to a truth which every man's understanding admits and every man's heart adopts, as soon as it is stated. But common experience shows us that the understanding and the heart are totally different in a season of passion and a season of quiet; that there are periods when anger and error are epidemical; when the wisest men forget the plainest rules; when it is necessary to call them back loudly and firmly to the first elements of justice.

Because this agitation of the public mind has proceeded from an apprehension for the safety of the Church Establishment, I shall endeavour to show what the fair limits of a church establishment are; and then to lay down those principles of toleration and liberality by which its blessings may

* This sermon was written and printed in the spring of 1807; when a clamour, for political purposes, was raised against the Catholics.

be most widely extended, its friends the most successfully increased, and its interests the most effectually protected.

The church must be distinguished from religion itself. We might be Christians without any established church at all; as some countries of the world are at this day. A church establishment is only an instrument for teaching religion; but an instrument of admirable contrivance and of vast utility.

*To constitute an established church there must be an order of men set apart for the ministerial office; a regular provision made for them; and a particular creed containing the articles of their faith. These are the three considerations which seem to make up our idea of an established church.

First, if those who instructed the people in their religion, were not a peculiar body of men set apart for that purpose, it is clear that the Christian religion, the evidences of which depend so much on history and on a knowledge of the dead languages, would be very imperfectly taught. Society, too, has a right to look to its clergy for the benefits of example as well as precept; which of course they could not do, if the character of a religious teacher could be assumed or laid aside at pleasure, and lasted only for the time requisite to deliver the instruction.

Secondly. The support of the clergy ought not to be left to the caprice and pleasure of individuals, but it should be (as it is) compulsory upon all; because, upon any other system they would either not be supported at all, or would be compelled to gain their subsistence by following where they ought to lead, and by flattering where it was their duty to instruct.

Lastly. If there were no articles of faith, to which it was necessary to subscribe in order to become a member of the established church, every species of contradiction would be preached to the same congregation; one minister would defend the doctrine of the Trinity and another would attack it. We should hear at one time, that Christ was the Son of God; and at another, that he was merely a prophet. The church would become as divided in its doctrines as Babel was in its language; and the minds of well-intentioned Christians, jaded by controversy, would lapse into uniform indifference upon all subjects of religion.

These, then, are the three main points upon which all

* This account of a church establishment is taken from Paley; though such truths are so obvious that a child might state them, if he had no interest in perverting the truth.

church establishments must rest; and thus far such institutions have reason on their side and powerfully promote the best interests of mankind. In spite of all wild and visionary theories, it is right that the state should choose a particular creed; that they should set apart a particular order of men to defend it; and compel every individual to pay to its support. Homely and coarse as these principles may appear to many speculative men, they are the only ones by which the existence of any religion can be secured to the community; and we have now too much reason to believe that the system of greater latitude, attempted naturally enough in the new world, will end fatally for the Christian religion, and for good practical morality.

It may also happen that a particular sect, dissenting from the doctrines of the church, is at the same time disloyally inclined towards the state; and then it seems expedient to seize hold of their religious creed as a mark of their political principles, and to exclude them from civil offices lest they should use the power such offices confer to the injury of the commonwealth. Exclusions of this kind exist in our own history; and in their origin they were, *perhaps*, wise and necessary. But it must be remembered they are not, nor were they intended to be, any *essential part* of a church establishment; they are only laws which make use of a religious test, to effect a particular purpose in government; laws which do not say that the man holding such religious opinions, must necessarily be an enemy to the state at all times, but that he is so at that particular time; and that the civil exclusion must remain as long as the political disaffection exists, and not a moment beyond.

I beg, then, before I speak of the spirit which ought to animate the Established Church, to remind you that the only essential and indispensable requisites for an establishment are, a separate order of men as teachers; a legal provision not left to the option of the people; and a clear exposition of their religious belief to be subscribed by all its members. It may be necessary, also, sometimes, for the state to make religious faith the test of political opinion, and, *therefore*, the reason for civil incapacities: but all these regulations are temporary, are by no means essential to the church establishment, and ought to cease with the causes which give them birth.

These are, as it seems to me and has seemed to wiser and

better men than me, the principles on which an establishment ought to be placed; and upon this base there will be reared a church, not of confusion but of peace.

I come now to that part of my discourse concerning the spirit and principles by which the members of the Established Church ought to be actuated, so as to promote the general purposes of benevolence specified in the text.

In the first place, there is nothing less Christian than to wish that the same penalties and deprivations of civil rights should remain, as a sort of degrading badge, upon those who differ from the Established Church. Whether the necessity for their continuation still exists, is another question; but if it does, to continue them is a duty, not a pleasure; it is not a triumph to be sought, but a melancholy and an hateful task to be performed; for to a genuine Christian it is always an hateful task to abridge the natural rights of any human being, to repress his industry, to damp his honest ambition, and to make him a stranger in the land of his birth. As I love to worship God according to my own conceptions of real religion, I love that every man should do the same; as I wish that all the honours and advantages of the realm were laid fairly open to my competition, I most ardently wish (if the safety of the state will admit of it), that they could be laid open to the competition of every man, let his faith be what it may. I have no more pleasure in depriving an human being of his civil freedom, than in depriving him of the blessings of light and of air. It is not *impossible* but that the safety of the state may require the continuation of such odious restrictions, but I would exact the most convincing proofs that such necessity did really exist; and I should look upon it as the most sacred of all duties, and the most exalted of all pleasures, to mark that moment when the public safety could be rendered compatible with complete freedom in religion. The spirit to be blamed, is the indecent joy and exultation, that other men are still continued in a state of bondage; the love of being free, the dread lest others should be as free; the narrow and perilous notion that every privation we can heap upon those who do not subscribe to its doctrines, is so much of solid gain for the Established Church.

It is contended that to deprive a man of the opportunity of attaining to certain honours in the state, is not persecution, to torture and to destroy for religious opinions is wrong; to block up the road to political power for the same reason is not wrong, and cannot be called by the name of persecution.

The plain answer to which error is this: you have no right to prohibit any pleasure, or to inflict any pain, without an adequate reason; you have no right to defeat an human being in the meanest of all his wishes, unless you can show that an adequate good is obtained to the community by so doing: much more are you bound, in rendering a particular mode of faith a cause of perpetual degradation, to show what those reasons are, which justify you in such an inroad upon the liberties of mankind; if this cannot be done, such exclusions are persecutions of the grossest nature; and all honest and enlightened Christians are bound to strive for their extinction.

It seems to be a want of candour in our Establishment to presume that time has produced no changes for the better in the spirit of any other religion. Though we ourselves are in great measure indebted to experience, and to the progress of civilization for that moderation by which we are distinguished, we conceive that the great book of observation has been shut to all other sects; that age has rolled on after age, without lightening their ancient darkness, or softening their early zeal. Availing ourselves of all the knowledge, all the tranquillity, and all the improvement we have gathered for three centuries; painting *ourselves* as the world is at this present day; we ask if the Catholic and the Calvinist of the sixteenth century, with all the cruelty, madness and ignorance of that period, are fit to be put upon a level with the enlightened member of the Establishment, and to be restored to the exercise of their natural rights? We oppose a creature of fact to a creature of history; and derive the advantage of our comparisons from the unfairness of the period at which they are made. The fact is, the written doctrine remains the same; the book is as it was before; *that* no sect ever alters; but with the same words in his mouth, the man may possess a very different heart; and repeating phrases of persecution, may be really actuated by the spirit of peace. We are therefore bound in justice to consider, not what is *said* by other sects, but what is DONE; not to seize upon lifeless and antiquated doctrines, which they have been too proud, too timid, and too careless to expunge; but to mark their religion both where it is in subjection, and where it is in power, and to gather its real character from its general spirit. This we expect that other religions should do to us; this other religions have a right to expect we should do to them.

It would tend to promote peace and prevent confusion (the

great object of my text), if the Establishment had a just confidence in its own strength. and a manly ease and security, the consequence of that confidence. Does it behove so learned, so opulent, so pious, so moral a body of men, to tremble for this vast and venerable Establishment, as if it were a little sickly heresy that had sprung up yesterday in the brain of some distempered enthusiast? Do the names and the writings of the English clergy go for so little? do time and habit produce such trifling effects upon the minds of men? is property of such little avail? have learning and argument such shallow resources, that the Church cannot endure the slightest extension of freedom to those out of its own pale, though it did exist a whole century before the freedom of these men was in the slightest degree diminished? Those who have lively and irritable feelings for the safety of the Church must admire that for which they fear so much; their admiration is wise and just, but how is it consistent with their belief in its rapid frailty and decay? The truth is, it is not frail and not perishable. If "the gates of hell shall not prevail against it," it will never be dashed to pieces against the rock of justice. It is strong enough to suffer all men to be free, and to disdain all other aid than that which it gains from teaching and from acting well.

The last twenty years of an history have been honourably distinguished by the innumerable laws of persecution they have repealed, and the comparative freedom they have extended to every description of Christians. At every stage of toleration, the destruction of the Established Church has been foretold; which never was more powerful or more justly respected, than at this moment. Is there any human being who wishes to put religious toleration on the same footing it was at the beginning of this period, and to deprive us of all the advantages of that liberal policy which has distinguished the present reign? The moment the restriction is thrown down all men wonder that it was ever reared up, that it was continued so long, or deemed so important. When persecution is put an end to, it is represented as useless or cruel: while it exists, it is praised as wise in its policy, and wholesome in its consequences.

It is the duty of every member of the Establishment, before he gives his assent to the continuation of such penal laws, to take care that he is not led away by inflammatory names. All names by which sectaries are denoted, are become terms

of passion and reproach; and the very expressions of Papist, Catholic and Presbyterian are, in the majority of instances, sufficient to decide opinion. These bad and hurtful notions are imbibed so early, and sink so deep, that the subject of religious difference is that of all others where a man of principle ought the most to suspect his own reason. The tenets of the Catholic faith are, I must say, in many instances, such as common sense revolts at; but many of the greatest and best men that ever lived have been Catholics; the common endearments of life go on with them as with us; great and civilized nations have, under the auspices of that religion, carried the arts of life to the highest pitch of refinement. Blaming that religion cordially, dissenting from it totally, wishing to inspire them with our better and purer knowledge of the Gospel, it is impossible to cry down its followers as men unworthy to be trusted by the state, and as unfit for all the offices of civil life; it is impossible to pour forth one sweeping clause of anathema and proscription against the greater half of the civilized world, and to contend that we are the only infallible judges of error and of truth. The Establishment is not guarded by such practices as these; but disgraced and humbled in the estimation of those reflecting persons who ought to be cultivated as its best and warmest friends.

I must add that nothing can be more injurious to the true interests of the Church, than to mingle its name with the political factions of the day, and to lend its authority to any purpose of individual ambition. If it is done by one party in politics, it will soon be imitated by the other; we shall then become a mere tool, to answer the purposes of two opposite factions; and the dearest interests of mankind will be sacrificed to the vilest of all purposes. This is the true way first to disgrace a church establishment; and then, (when it has incurred universal contempt,) to destroy it.

Some feelings of generosity we might display towards other sects, from the recollection that we are the strongest, that we are endowed, that we are protected; that we have the favour of the great mass of the people, and the countenance and support of the law. It would be charitable to remember, that these things must be galling to those who have as firm a conviction in the truth and superiority of the creed as we can possibly have of ours. The beautiful spirit, and the true policy are, to allay the little jealousy our advantages must occasion, to soften these mortifying distinctions by every

amiable concession, and by every charitable judgment: not to inflame a painful sense of inferiority into a furious hatred; not wantonly to insult other Christians, or needlessly to depress them; but cheerfully and eagerly to impart to them every advantage with which the security of the Establishment can possibly be rendered compatible.

Piety and honesty are always venerable, with whatever degree of error they happen to be connected. Far from considering the sectarian clergy as objects of ridicule, contempt, and persecution, it is impossible to witness their laborious exertions for what they believe to be the truth, their poverty, the insignificance and obscurity in which they pass their lives, without experiencing for them very sincere sentiments both of pity and respect.

It is now time, however, that I should close what I have to say upon this very important subject. It cannot, I am sure, be necessary to apologize for any sentiments calculated to inspire mankind with the spirit of religious charity, and to remind them, that the God of us all, is the God not "of confusion, but of peace." If a religious establishment were nothing but a barbarous and monastic institution; if it were merely an human institution; it might be necessary to prop it up with penal laws, narrow jealousies, and political factions. Such unworthy arts might for a little time retard its deserved fate; but convinced as I am that in the uninterrupted order of its prelates it is of apostolical origin, that in its human arrangements and provisions it is founded upon the solid basis of good sense and public utility, I am sure it wants no such aids as these. The more liberal the spirit it displays when any great question of human happiness is at stake; the more noble that disposition which it exhibits towards all other descriptions of Christians; the less it suffers itself to be contaminated by faction, and be duped by party; by all that it increases in learning, in piety, and in good conduct; by all this will it conciliate universal affection, be raised in real dignity, and increase in permanent strength. These are the real means of security, and the only true art of continuing and protecting religion in the world. One man dies, and another is born; but public opinion under God settles the fate of all human institutions; blaming and degrading the works of violence; loving, honouring, strengthening and sanctifying the deeds of justice, the spirit of charity, and the establishments of peace.

SERMON XXXII.

ON VANITY.

Behold all is vanity and vexation of spirit.—Ecclesiastes i. verse 14.

Those vices are not always the most dangerous which are the most rapid of operation, but as effects strike the senses most where they follow immediately from their causes, such vices have been more accurately observed, and more clearly explained, than any others. In the mean time, there are many habits of thought little noticed, and little feared, which pollute no less effectually the springs of the heart, and destroy the purity of religion. We shudder at falsehood, at ingratitude, at neglect of serious duties, at hardness of heart; we look at vanity with a smile of contempt, at the vanity of the young and gay, with a smile of indulgence; it seems to our improvident view an harmless plant, that has got up in the luxuriant soil of youth, and will quickly wither away in more mature age; in the mean time, up it climbs, and strangles in its grasp the towering and lordly passions of the soul.

I mean by vanity, the excessive love of praise, and I call it excessive, whenever it becomes a motive to action; for to make men indifferent to the praise of their fellow-creatures, as a *consequence* of their actions, is not, that I know of, anywhere enjoined by our sacred religion, nor would it be wise if it were possible.

The vanity of great men, when it stimulates them to exertions, useful to mankind, is that species of vanity, which seems to approach the nearest to virtue, and which we most readily pardon for its effects; and, indeed, so much are we inclined to view actions by their splendour, or their importance, rather than by their motives, that we can hardly agree

to call by the name of vain, a man who has exercised consummate and successful ability upon great objects; whereas, there is a vanity of great, and a vanity of little minds, and the same passion regulates a ceremony which saves or ruins a kingdom. It is better, to be sure, that good (if it cannot be done from the best), should be done from any motive, rather than not be done at all; but the dignity of the fact can never communicate purity to the intention. True religion consists not only in action, but in the mind with which we act; and the highest beneficence, which flows from vanity, though it may exalt us in the eyes of men, abases us in the view of God.

It is curious to observe this versatile passion of vanity, in all the forms under which it loves to exist; every shape, every colour, every attitude becomes it alike; sometimes it is a virtue, and sometimes a decency, and sometimes a vice; it gives birth to the man of refined manners, the profligate, the saint, and the hero; it plays with the toy of the child; it totters on the crutch of age; it lingers on the bed of sickness, and gathers up its last strength to die with decent effect amidst the plaudits of the world. The fall of great cities, the waste of beautiful provinces, the captivity of nations, the groans and bleedings of the earth. Whence have they sprung? that folly might worship, that fame might record, that the world might look on, and wonder; for these feelings men have embittered life, accelerated death, and abjured eternity. But with these vast scenes, I have nothing to do here; to common life, and ordinary occasions, I must at present confine myself.

One of the great evils of vanity is, that it induces hardness of heart. Compassion must have exercise, or it will cease to exist; the mind cannot be engrossed at once by two opposite systems of hopes and fears. If we are occupied by the consideration of what the world will think on every occasion, there is no leisure for reflection on those solemn duties which we owe to our fellow-creatures; duties which God has not trusted to reason only, but towards which he has warned us by compassion and inward feeling. These feelings soon cease to admonish, when they are unheeded, and the voice of humanity, when it has often spoken in vain, speaks no more. Soon the cry of him who wants bread will come up no longer to your ear; soon you will turn from the sad aspect of age,

and your heart will become shut to the miseries of man, never again to be opened.

The havoc which vanity makes on the social feelings, is as conspicuous as that which it exercises on those of compassion. One of the most painful symptoms it produces, is an impatience of home. The vain man has no new triumphs to make over his family, or his kindred; their society becomes tedious, and insupportable to him; he flies to every public circle for relief, where the hope of being admired lightens up in him that gayety which never beams on those who ought to be the nearest to his heart. Thus it is, that the lives of many in great cities are passed in crowds, and frittered away in a constant recurrence of the same frivolous amusements; after the poignant gratifications of vanity, every other species of sensation becomes insipid; the mind shrinks from duty, and from improvement, and the whole character becomes trifling and degraded. It is easy to misrepresent these observations, by supposing them to be leveled against pleasure, and amusement in general; whereas, it is not only lawful to enjoy the innocent pleasures of society in moderation; but it is unwise not to enjoy them. That pleasure only is to be censured which becomes a business, and corrupts the heart instead of exhilarating the spirits. Dignity of character is a very subtle thing, and as the guardian of many virtues, should be carefully preserved; but if there be any fault which extinguishes amiable and pious sentiment, hardens the heart, destroys delicacy of manners, and wipes off all bloom and freshness from the mind, it is constant and eternal dissipation. The very essence of pleasure is rarity; admiration too eagerly pursued, leads infallibly to contempt; and the qualities which produce the greatest effect, are always those of which the possessor is the most profoundly ignorant.

It is so little the habit of mankind in general, to look to the consequences of things, that vanity has been strangely denominated an innocent foible; and yet there is not a single virtue which it does not degrade, nor a single vice to which it does not lead. Look to the many families reduced to ruin from ostentatious expense; the profligate who is debauched, that the world may applaud his spirit; the Deist who laughs and trembles; the atheist who prays in secret; the weak tribe who follow fortune, and hate the unhappy; age lingering in the haunts of pleasure, and summoned from the feast to the

grave; see ruined women, and mistaken sages; beautiful talents, heroic qualities, and princely virtues sunk down to the dust, and the sad fall of men, whom nature sent forth to rule, to enlighten, and to adorn the world. This is the evil which the wise man saw, and said that the earth was filled with it, that all things were vanity and vexation of spirit.

Vanity is not only a dangerous passion, but it is an absurd passion; as it does not in general attain the end it proposes to itself. The way to gain wealth is to seek it. Learning is only acquired by constant and eager labour; but to gain praise, you must be indifferent in it; for the rule of commendation is, and ought to be, the very reverse of the rule of charity; to give most to those who want it least, and thus by ill success to teach a better motive to action. Vanity is every day detected and disgraced; we know men who believe themselves to be objects of universal admiration, while in fact they are objects of universal contempt; we see how difficult it is to conceal the passion, or prevent the ridicule consequent upon it; yet we are vain, and believe that acute malice will be blind for us alone.

A vain man looks more to the pleasure than the means of triumph, and experiences defeat, because he sings the song of victory while he should be spreading his ranks for the battle. If he succeed, he loses even the inaccurate measure of himself which he before possessed, attempts greater, and still greater achievements, and is sure at last to fail, because it is the easiest of all things to find difficulties superior to human powers.

It must be from the most lamentable want of self-examination, that this vice is ever found in the Christian mind. Christianity consists not only in what we do, and in what we avoid, but in the sentiments we encourage, and the habits of thinking we gradually acquire. A vain Christian may have faith, and he may have conformity; he may worship and believe, but where is his humble soul, his mild and steady wisdom, and his awful sense of the ever-during presence of God? These are the sweet virtues on which this worm of vanity pastures, and these the miserable relics of Christianity which it leaves behind.

A very vain person is very seldom a very happy person; he lives under no certain law; the rule of his conduct is the caprice of those with whom he lives; he never knows to-day, what he is to do to-morrow, and is constantly acting a part

before an audience who become difficult to please, in proportion as he is desirous to please them; he lives in constant perturbation, and is ever flushed with triumph or pale with despair; he is a slave in essence who feels that he has not dignity to be free, and erects every man he meets into a master and a lord.

A religious man enjoys the supreme comfort of living under general rules; he is ever dignified, because ever consistent; he avoids the misery of doubt, and follows a clear line of conduct through all times, and seasons, and events. While the world are in good humour with him, he enjoys their praise as an accidental good, though he never seeks it as an ultimate object; if the rectitude of his motives be not understood, he wraps himself in his virtue, and gazes from the temple of conscience at the storm which ravages beneath; the will of God is the guide of his life, and he moves through this earth with fear and fortune beneath his feet, and with Heaven open to his view.

This love of praise, so strongly infixed in our nature, it is rather our duty to direct than to extinguish. The excellence, which requires neither to be encouraged nor corrected, exists not in the world; the commendation or censure of enlightened men, is, perhaps, the best test here below of the purity and wisdom of what we intend, and the propriety and success of what we do; and a wise man will always make this use of the decisions of the world; when he is blamed, he will listen with sacred modesty to the collected wisdom of many men, he will measure back his footsteps on the path of life, and whichever way he decides, he will know that he has either obtained success or deserved it; he will receive praise as a probable, not as a certain evidence that he is right; nay, he will do more, he will rejoice in the approbation of his fellow-creatures; every feeling of his heart will expand; it will cheer him in his long struggle, and dissipate that melancholy which the best sometimes feel at the triumph of folly, and the fortune of vice.

I have thus endeavoured to convince you of the danger of this widely diffused and little-suspected passion of vanity, and I have attempted also to show you that it injures the understanding, that it injures the heart, that it injures the Christian character, that it defeats its own end, and, while it sues for admiration, often insures contempt. Be it your care to watch its baneful influence, and to live from nobler motives.

If you wish for the praise of man, cease to pursue it; live that life which, sooner or later, leads to honour in this world, and to eternity in the next; be just, be modest, be charitable; love dearly your fellow-creatures, and number your days by the miseries you have lessened, and the blessings you have diffused. Study your own heart with the patience of a Christian; coolly mark, and steadily resist the tendency to wrong. Let wisdom ever increase with decay, and the soul gather new light as its covering crumbles into dust; this is the life which will more effectually secure to you the sweets of praise than all the toils and all the vexations of vanity; you will reign in the hearts of men, and move amongst them like the angel of wisdom and peace; and when, in the fullness of years, and in the fullness of honours, you rest for the short sabbath of the tomb, the cold, dull earth which falls upon your bier, shall be a cruel sound to the wretched and the good; a whole city shall gather round your grave, and weep over their guide, their father, and their friend.

SERMON XXXIII.

ON SUICIDE.

Saul took a sword, and fell upon it.—1st Book of Samuel xxxi. verse 4.

It is not easy to conceive a more melancholy picture of suicide and despair than that which is exhibited in the latter end of Saul; "and the battle went sore against Saul, and the archers hit him, and he was sore wounded by the archers: Then said Saul unto his armour bearer, draw thy sword, and thrust me through therewith; but his armour bearer would not, therefore Saul took a sword, and fell upon it." In this way did Saul shrink from adversity; he went forth glorying in his majesty, the anointed of the Lord, king over the chosen people of God; the battle turns against him; he is sore wounded of the archers, and, forgetful of that all-seeing eye, which looks down upon the smitten and afflicted man, he rushes upon voluntary destruction, and seeks in death a cure for the anguish of wounds and the shame of defeat.

This crime of self-murder, thus strikingly exemplified in the death of Saul, is one said to prevail in this country to a greater extent than in any other part of the European world; whether this notion be true, or exaggerated, the crime exists in a degree sufficient to produce misery and horror to many individuals; and to exhibit to the world at large, flagrant examples of disobedience to the will of Providence; it therefore exists in a degree to justify any Christian minister, in commenting upon it, whose object is to promote the happiness of his fellow-creatures, and to enforce and explain the commands of that heavenly Master, whose servant he is.

As to the utility of such discussion if principles are good and sound, if remonstrance is founded upon pure feelings of religion, men sometimes employ it to prevent the excesses of

passion, and sometimes they remember it in the midst of passion; and, if a sense of duty can restrain avarice, lust, anger, and revenge, why may it not calm the madness of despair, and induce him to carry on the load of life who pants and wearies for the grave; at all events, it is the duty of a minister to diffuse good principles without doubting but that it will produce good consequences; to scatter the seed, whether it fall among tares, or upon rocks, or whether it please God to give it fertility and increase.

If we consider that by morality is meant that conduct which promotes the general happiness, the notion that self-murder is lawful, must be highly immoral, from the direct tendency which it has to destroy human happiness by increasing vice. The object of religious instruction always has been to awaken the attention of mankind to those future pleasures even in this life, which proceed from the exertions of righteousness; and to those future pains which await the gratifications of sin; its object has been not to debar men from pleasure, but to make them acute and long-sighted about pleasure; to weaken the power of the present moment, and to give to futurity that just influence which it ought to have upon our determinations. Now the firm belief that we have no lawful control over our own lives, that it is our indispensable duty, under every circumstance of good or evil fortune, to live on to the last, comes directly in aid of these views. If we conceive that (under the will of God), we must live to the common period of human life, it is probable we shall make some provision for future health of body and peace of mind; the necessity of living increases the chances of living well; to him who has threescore and ten years to remain upon the earth, it is worth the pains to cultivate mankind, to love virtue, to maintain justice and truth: it is worth the pains even to act greatly and splendidly; it gives new interest to the game of life to contend for honourable fame, and to be a guide and a benefactor to mankind. But what has he to fear or hope from man, whose own hand is the messenger of God, and can tear him from life more surely than pestilence or pain? Why should he quit any vice which gives him momentary pleasure? Eat and drink, for to-morrow you die, said the Apostle; but these are narrow limits for him who is the lord of his own life.—Ruin, injure and deceive, for to-morrow you die; crowd infamy upon infamy; add horror to horror; and when a ruined body and a restless mind tell you that to-morrow is

come, your remedy is nigh at hand, you may curse God and die.

Our Creator, it is said, has given us a general desire to obtain good and avoid evil; why may we not obey this impulse? We leave a kingdom or a society, of which we do not approve; we avoid bodily pain by all the means which we can invent; why may we not cease to live when life becomes a greater evil than a good? Because in avoiding pain or in procuring pleasure, we are always to consider the good of others, as well as our own. Poverty is an evil, but we may not rob to avoid it; power is a good, but it is not justifiable to obtain it by violence or deceit; we have only a right to consult our own good within certain boundaries, and after such a manner that we do not diminish the good of others: Every evil incapable of such limited remedy, it is our duty to bear; and if the general idea, that we have a right to procure voluntary death to ourselves, be pregnant with infinite mischief to the interests of religion and morality, it is our duty to live, as much as it is our duty to do anything else for the same reason; a single instance of suicide may be of little consequence; nor is a single instance of robbery of much; but we judge of single actions, by the probability there is of their becoming frequent, and by the effects they produce when they are frequent.

Suicide is as unfavourable to human talents and resources as it is to human virtues; we should never have dreamt of the latent power and energy of our nature, but for the struggle of great minds with great afflictions, nor known the limits of ourselves, nor man's dominion over fortune. What would the world now have been, if it had always been said, because the archers smite me sore and the battle goeth against me, I will die? Alas! man has gained all his joy by his pains; misery, hunger, and nakedness have been his teachers, and goaded him on to the glories of civilized life; take from him his unyielding spirit, and if he had lived at all, he would have lived the most suffering creature of the forest.

Suicide has been called magnanimity; but what is magnanimity? A patient endurance of evil to effect a proposed good; and when considering the strange mutability of human affairs, are we to consider this endurance as useless or when should hope terminate but with life? To linger out year after year, unbroken in spirit, unchanged in purpose, is doubtless a less imposing destiny than public and pompous suicide;

but if to be, is more commendable than to seem to be; if we love the virtue better than the name, then is it true magnanimity to extract wisdom from misery and doctrine from shame; to call day and night upon God; to keep the mind's eye sternly riveted on its object through failure and through suffering; through evil report and through good report; and to make the bed of death the only grave of human hope; but at the moment when Christianity warns you that your present adversity may be a trial from God; when experience teaches that great qualities come in arduous situations; when piety stimulates you to show the hidden vigour, the inexhaustible resources, the beautiful capacities of that soul which God has exempted from the destruction which surrounds it; at that moment the law of self-murder gives you for your resource, ignominious death, frightful disobedience, and never-ending torments.

It may be imagined that suicide is a crime of rare occurrence, but we must not so much overrate our love of life, when there is hardly a passion so weak which cannot at times overcome it; many fling away life from ambition, many from vanity, many from restlessness, many from fear, many from almost every motive; nature has made death terrible, but nature has made those evils terrible, from the dread of which we seek death; nature has made resentment terrible, infamy terrible, want terrible, hunger terrible; every first principle of our nature alternately conquers and is conquered; the passion that is a despot in one mind, is a slave in the other; we know nothing of their relative force.

It is hardly possible to conceive this crime, committed by any one who has not confounded his common notions of right and wrong by some previous sophistry, and cheated himself into a temporary skepticism; but who would trust to the reasoning of such a moment, in such a state of the passions, when the probability of error is so great, and the punishment so immeasurable? Men should determine even upon important human actions with coolness and unimpeded thought; much less then is a rash and disturbed hour enough for eternity. Whoever thought of agitating such a question without feeling an intolerable weight of sin upon his soul? Whoever voluntarily quitted the world, at peace with himself and with mankind? All is passion when all ought to be trembling deliberation; when you are abandoned by the grace of God, when you are compassed round about with the awful ven-

geance of man, when there is no good action on which your soul can lean and rest, when you are become a desolation and a great ruin, that is the very moment you choose to rush into eternity before the God of purity and power.

All these reasonings are of universal application; but there are still stronger reasons for him who has bound himself to the world by the strong ties of husband, friend or parent. Suppose that Christianity does not forbid the crime, (which it does virtually in every page;) suppose it did not violate in other cases the intentions of Providence by breaking the course of nature, still how can there exist the right to inflict such intolerable wretchedness upon those who remain behind, to bequeath to them an horror which no future happiness can ever calm, to make weak, timid, affectionate minds remember that it was no irresistible disease which did this, that it was not by old age they lost their protector, that they never took the last leave of you; but that in an hour of madness you quitted them suddenly and cruelly, and that in a world to come they can hope to see you no more.

It is painful to a man to look upon a family that he has ruined, and to mix with children and kindred whom he has disgraced; but you owe it to them to keep your pride low; you owe to them the slow and dismal task of repentance; it is your duty to bear the compunction of shame, and the lashes of remorse; to feel degraded; to live and to get better. Those, too, whose reproaches you most fear, are ready to bear ruin and disgrace with you; they will dry up your tears and give you dignity and peace of heart: but the way which a self-murderer reasons is: "Because I have reduced those whom I love to ruin and disgrace, I will drive them to despair; I have abstained from no pleasures for the sake of others, and I will bear no pain for them; I will perpetuate, by the ignominy of my death, all that wretchedness which I have caused by the crimes of my life."

It has often been asked, if self-murder is forbidden by the Christian religion; but those who ask this question forget that Christianity is not a code of laws, but a set of principles from which particular laws must frequently be inferred; it is not sufficient to say, there is no precise and positive law, naming and forbidding self-murder; there is no law of the Gospel which forbids the subject to destroy his ruler; but there is a law which says, fear and obey him; there is no

law which prevents me from slaying my parents; but there is a law which says, love and honour them; "be meek," says our Saviour; "be long-suffering; abide patiently to the last; submit to the chastening hand of God," and let us never forget, that the fifth and greatest gospel is the life of Christ; that he acted for us, as well as taught; that in the deserts of Judea, in the hall of Pilate, on the supreme cross, his patience shows us that evil is to be endured, and his piety and his prayers point out to us how alone it can be mitigated.

It is the misfortune of those who plead for morality and religion, that they can seldom intimidate but with distant evil, and allure but with distant good; nevertheless, by the grace of God, many a warning precept, little noticed perhaps at the time it is heard, lays hid in the soul, to start forth when the snares of death encompass us round about, and the pains of hell get hold upon us. I am well convinced that there is not one individual in this solemn assembly, who has the most remote conception that he can ever be guilty of the crime of which I have been speaking; there are some, perhaps who may consider the very mention of it as useless or injudicious. So thought the once happy and prosperous men, who, in our days, have perished by their own hand; the wealthy, the noble and the good who have shocked and astonished mankind by this act of despair. No man ought to say that his virtues are less corruptible, his fortunes more lasting, and his fate more fixed than theirs; all these said that years of glory and peace were before them; that they should live happily; that they should go down in quiet to the grave. Alas! the day may come, when the noblest, when the happiest, when the best man here present, who now wonders that such a crime should exist among mankind, shall stand trembling in the twilight of life and death, shall say to the sun, "I shall see thee no more; and to the face of nature, farewell." No man ought to suppose that he can begin the swift career of unrighteousness, and stop short of the last abyss. No gambler, no adulterer, no restless voluptuary, no man who drains life of the last dregs of pleasure, can ever say that his own existence is secure from the fierceness of his passions; it is a lowered and a chastened heart, which makes a man respect and guard his own life; a belief that whether he is a beggar or a prince, whether he is tried by the good, or tried by the evil of life, it is his duty to remain till the great judge bids

him depart. That he owes it to the will of the Supreme Being, to the Christian law, to worldly endearments, to general utility, to individual magnanimity, to brave every vicissitude of fortune, while he extracts from those vicissitudes of every nature, and in every degree, fresh sources of solid improvement, and new occasions for pious and resigned obedience to the will of God.

SERMON XXXIV.

ON REVENGE.

And Esau ran to meet him, and embraced him, and fell upon his neck, and kissed him: and they wept.—GENESIS XXXIII. VERSE 4.

THE injury Esau received from his brother, his anger, and the flight of Jacob consequent upon it, form the first part of that beautiful story of Scripture, of which my text is the very interesting conclusion.

After an absence of many years, Jacob, who had fled in poverty, and at an early period of life, from his native country, returns the father of many children, and the lord of much pastoral wealth; returns, however, suffering the strongest apprehensions from the deserved resentment of his brother Esau, and willing to allay that resentment, by a very considerable sacrifice of his possessions. "And Jacob commanded his servants saying, thus shall ye speak unto my lord Esau, thy servant Jacob sayeth thus: I have sojourned with Laban, and stayed there until now; and I have oxen, and asses, and men servants, and maid servants; and I have sent to tell my lord, that I may find grace in thy sight." After some interval, the history brings the two brothers within sight of each other. "And Jacob lifted up his eyes, and looked, and behold Esau came, and with him four hundred men; and he passed over before them, and bowed to the ground seven times until he came near to his brother." Here then was the moment for which so many human beings pray; the foot of Esau was upon the neck of his enemy, and there lay stretched out before him that treacherous brother whom in bitterness he had often cursed, and in imagination had often slain. But in all his anger, he had never thought that Jacob would kiss his feet for mercy, and weep on the ground before him; for

this Esau was not prepared, but ran to meet Jacob, and embraced him, and fell on his neck and kissed him, and they wept. So wept the much injured Joseph over his cruel brothers; so weep good men over their repentant enemies in all ages, and in all climates; listening to the God within them, and acting, for a moment, like the creatures of a purer world than this.

I shall take occasion, from the introduction of this beautiful story of Esau, to treat of the forgiveness of injuries; pointing out as well as I am able, the most common obstacles, and the most powerful motives to the acquisition of this first of the Christian faith.

It may be said, consistently with the strictest truth, that revenge is not the characteristic fault of this country. Christianity has so far interwoven its precepts in our habits and manners, that we have commonly the fairest disposition to forgive. The unchristian spirit of remembering, and resenting injury, has no excuse in the spirit of the nation or the age;—it derives no colour from reflection, no malignity from example; it is original, native, individual badness.

The most obvious motive to forgive, is the pleasure of forgiving, and the pain of resenting. It is not meant by this, that there is no pain which accompanies the pleasure of forgiveness; or no pleasure mingled with the pain of resentment; but the pain of forgiving is of short duration; the pleasure ever recurring; causing a man to love and respect himself; breathing a satisfaction over the whole of life; remembered the hour before dissolution, offered up to God as an atonement for sin;—thought of in sickness, in pain, and in all the miseries of the flesh, when power is forgotten and glory despised.

In the same way there is some sort of pleasure in resentment; when tears and wounds break out afresh, at the sight of some accursed oppressor, it is hard to raise this man from the ground, and to give to him the words of comfort, and the kiss of peace. But remember the laws by which our nature is controlled; when we have shed the blood of him who was our enemy, when we have broken down his stateliness, and made him a taunt and a reproach, we shall be turned to mercy, and our tears will fall down over his wretchedness; our anger will come back no more, and we shall mourn over the desolation of our hands. When we have humbled all that we have wished to humble, and destroyed all that we lusted to destroy,—when we cease to be supported by strong

passions,—when we cannot retract or repair, we shall begin to repent.

Again, common observation upon human character shows us, that great schemes of resentment always give way; no man can hate for a whole life; the passion which seemed immortal, is at length swept off by the current of impressions, and at the close of life, when little time remains for affection, the feelings of nature return; year after year has passed away in silent gloom, and indignation; every emotion of affection stifled; every office of kindness lost; all the sweet consolations of existence lavished away; and then, when the grave admonishes enemies to forgive, they mourn over the kindness they have lost, to renew it for a moment, and lose it again for ever. Therefore, as the apostle says, repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand; we may say forgive, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. Forgive while forgiveness is worth having; forgive, while there remains enough of life for the renewal of kindness; forgive while you have something else to bestow on repentance than lingering looks and faltering words.

And what does this solemn Christian injunction of forgiving do, but eradicate from the mind the most painful and most unquiet of all passions? What wretchedness to clamour out for ever, "I will pursue, I will overtake; my right hand shall dash in pieces mine enemy;" to sacrifice all the quiet happiness of life, to sicken on the bosom of joy; still after the lapse of years to feel, to see, and to suffer with the freshness of yesterday; and in the midst of blessings to exclaim, all this availeth me nothing, while Mordecai, the Jew, sitteth at the king's gate.

Are we sure, too, that the cause of our resentment is just? have we collected the most ample evidence? have we examined it with the closest attention? have we subjected it to impartial revision? have we suspected our passions? have we questioned our self-love? When we make such terrible resolutions of eternal hatred; when we disobey the great rule of the Gospel; when we proclaim ourselves as punishers and avengers; it at least behoves us to know, that we have seen facts as they really are, and reasoned rightly upon them. But the truth is, no man ought to be bold enough to expose his eternal salvation to such peril; no man ought to say I am so sure of my own passions, that I will risk my peace upon them in this world, and my safety in the next; I see every

day, that the hatred of others is unjust; I am sure mine is just; I am surrounded by pride, by error, and by infirmity; I only am candid, temperate and good. What, if the revolutions of time, mellowing and changing the passions of man, as it changes the outward face of nature, convince us, that our hatred and persecution have been unjust? the years of our delusion have past quickly on; death has snatched from us the object of our hatred, and all the reparation is impossible; God says, pardon real injuries, forgive true sufferings; what mercy then will he have for the anger which oppresses innocence, or can we believe that he will pardon our trespasses, if we are implacable even against them who have not trespassed against us? for it is worthy of observation, that while other duties are only made the object of precepts, this duty of forgiveness of injuries, is the very condition upon which we are permitted to prefer any petition to the throne of mercy; it is not said simply thou shalt forgive him that trespasseth against thee; but we are made to say, forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us; a form of words which cuts off the resentful man from the most distant hope of divine favour; and, in truth, it is monstrous to die with a load of passion, folly and vice, without an atom of mercy for the passions, the follies, and the vices of others; to implore, and to threaten in one breath; to place the Redeemer Jesus between you and Omnipotence, you who have never forgiven, or redeemed, or saved, or wept, or listened, or lifted up the bruised contrite spirit; you shall ask in vain on that day, when vengeance is near at hand; when every rock and hill are molten with heat; when the bow of God is bent; when the thunder and all the war of heaven are rolling above your head.

Men are so far, generally, from being ashamed of not forgiving injuries, that they often glory in revenge; they believe it to be united with courage, and with watchful dignified pride; the attribute of a nature not to be approached without difficulty, much less to be insulted with impunity, boundless in gratitude and resentment, full of every wild untaught virtue, and every magnanimous, popular vice, a nature firm above others in what it purposes, and vivid above others in what it feels. Yet, after all, what talents, or what virtue, can an unforgiving disposition possibly imply? Who is most likely longest to retain the sense of injured dignity? He who has given no pledge to his fellow-creatures that he

is good and amiable? who does not feel that he is invulnerable? who is least fortified by a long tenour of just intentions, and wise actions? What man, who had ever trodden one step in the paths of religion, would vex the sunshine of his existence with all the inquietudes of resentment? would ingraft upon his life the labour of hating, and hover, year after year, over expiring injuries? Who is there, that bears about him an heart of flesh, that would put away a brother, or a friend who knelt to him for mercy? If there be virtue and merit in such feelings as these, let us, at least, draw our virtues from a source where the worst and vilest of mankind cannot dip with us; if such be the creed of the world, this is the creed of the Gospel. "If there be any who have taken my ox, or my ass, and I have not forgiven him; if the shadow be long, and the sun be going down, and I am stirred up against any one of my brethren; if there be any man in the whole earth, the latchet of whose shoe, the hair of whose head I would injure; if that man come to me, and hold out his hand, and say, it repenteth me sore, that I have sinned against thee; if I turn that man away in the bitterness of his heart, if I run not forward to meet him, may God turn away from me in the bitterness of my heart, and while mine enemy rests in the bosom of Abraham, may there be no drop of water for my thirst."

Other men who have no desire to be thought magnanimous because they revenge, are still apprehensive of being considered as timid if they forgive and resent, to maintain a character for spirit; but it is certainly extremely possible to combine temperate resistance to present injustice, with a tendency to forgive what is past; to be firm in the maintainance of just rights, while we abstain from any greater injury to our enemies than is necessary to maintain them, and hold ourselves ready for forgiveness, when they are maintained. If, indeed, power and esteem are the principal objects of human attention, the highest power over the minds of men, and their most perfect esteem, are oftentimes obtained by a forgiving, rather than a resenting disposition; an enemy, won over by kindness, is always the most durable friend; there is nothing excites greater gratitude than forbearance, where resentment would have been justifiable; nothing which secures so forcibly our admiration, as to perceive that any man is so much the master of his own nature; like the apostles in the ship, when we see him rising up, and rebuking the winds,

and waves of the mind, we are beyond measure amazed, and ask what manner of man may this be who can command his own soul, and whom the passions and angers obey. We must, therefore, distinctly remember, that it is very frequently possible to effect by forgiveness every object which we propose to effect by resentment; it is possible, by forgiving, to open the mind of an enemy to a sense of his injustice, to excite his admiration, to conciliate his affection, and to turn his heart; it is possible to do everything with forgiveness, that can be done with resentment, except to give pain,—there is, indeed, even a pain to be inflicted by forgiveness, but a pain which is at once the symptom and the guardian of Christian virtue; compunction for having offended against a generous and forgiving man. This pain you may inflict if you will; he who inflicts it must be the disciple of Christ, and he who feels it is not far from being so.

I have a great deal more to say upon this subject, more than it will be possible to say in my present discourse, and it will be necessary to resume it on some future occasion; to say too much upon it, will not be easy for a minister of the Gospel. In every occasion of his life, our blessed Saviour preached forgiveness; to Sadducee, and to Pharisee; to Gentile, and to Jew; to poor and to rich; mercy to others, if you wish for mercy, was his doctrine; God forgiveth the forgiver; he that smiteth, shall be smitten; so Jesus taught, and dying, as he lived, prayed for his murderers, looking up to heaven and saying, *God forgive them, they know not what they do.*

SERMON XXXV.

ON THE TREATMENT OF SERVANTS.

Masters, give unto your servants that which is just, and equal, knowing that ye also have a Master in Heaven.—Colossians iv. verse 1.

Upon first turning our mind to consider those causes which preserve any society in a state of order and regularity, we are apt to attribute this effect to the laws alone, and to believe that it is principally the fear of punishment, which inculcates one line of conduct, and discourages another; whereas the fact is, if the welfare of mankind depended alone upon the struggle of two hostile principles, the passion which urged to the commission of the crime on the one hand, and the law that prohibited it on the other, there had been an end long since of human association and refinement; and man, after such a vain experiment to better his condition and improve his nature, had returned to his ancient woods, with a fierceness confirmed by experiment, and a barbarity resumed upon system.

If the law has not powerful assistance and co-operation, it can never cope with human depravity. Accordingly, besides the great and cardinal support of religion, we see education and opinion disciplining the mind of man to a state of wholesome obedience, and preparing him for those wise restraints upon which the very existence of society depends. To these auxiliaries of the law may be added another very important one; I mean family government, the most simple, the most natural, and the most ancient of all governments. How very much virtue and religion must be promoted by the due exercise of this authority in all its branches, is too plain to be proved; the best administered governments must mistake much and overlook much; it is of course impossible that they

can descend to inspect the lives and conducts of individuals, and to regulate, with minute and laborious justice, the proportion of merit and reward. Now, the chiefs of a family have an intimate knowledge of every individual in it, a lively interest in their rectitude of conduct, and an influence over them to which nobody else can pretend.

It is not my intention to treat of every branch of family government, but simply of that to which my text relates, the connection between master and servant. The subject is an humble one, and little susceptible of ornament: but it is of daily occurrence; and, as a considerable share of our comfort depends upon it, it certainly makes up in utility what it loses in dignity. It is a very easy thing to say of a religion, that it has a tendency to assuage human passions, and soften human manners; we must justify our praise by exemplifying it, and, coming home to the business of men, show in moral detail what Christianity exacts from the husband, the father, the master, and the son; and thus make eulogium rational by giving a clear view of the specific excellencies on which it is founded.

To a Christian, besides, the duties he owes to any class of his fellow-creatures, however low they may be placed beneath him in wealth and rank, can never be but a serious and solemn concern; for he bears within him a leveling faith which beats down the pride of man to the dust, which tells him that the poorest creature in his own shape has a soul which came from God and before God will stand in judgment at that day when the first shall be last, and the last be first, and all flesh be changed.

It may be necessary to observe, that I mean simply to consider the connection between master and servant, on one side only; not the duty which a servant owes to his master, but that which a master owes to his servant; considering this as the only part of the subject which can be particularly applicable and interesting to my present congregation; nor shall I go on touching methodically upon every common duty, but shall content myself with mentioning only the most common faults which we are apt to commit in fulfilling this relation of life. I hope you will not think the subject I have chosen too low or too particular for discussion in this place; let us never forget that the real test of Christian merit is action, and that if we are not Christians in the daily and common transactions of our life, the ardour of devotion, and sincerity

of our belief by evincing that we know the rule which we neglect, and the lawgiver whom we disobey, are proofs of our guilt and not of our virtue. I the more insist on this, because it is the easiest and most common of all things to deceive ourselves, and to substitute, instead of the toil of moral emendation, an overheated fancy, and an undoubting faith, and then to believe that we are doing our duty to God and man.

I may very fairly begin with laying it down as a rule that we owe to those placed under us, gentle language, and a kind, and benevolent deportment. We are all of us enough disposed to allow, and to make eulogiums upon Christianity, as a beneficent system of morals. In this commendation, the skeptic has shown an equal alacrity with the Christian; but do we imagine that our Saviour, in the zeal with which he everywhere promotes the happiness of mankind, while he endeavours to throw open every compassionate heart as an asylum for the afflicted, and to make the good an altar for the miserable; do we imagine that while he remembers the bodily wants, he forgets the moral feelings of man? that he has not restrained the sallies of passion, as much as he has quickened the emotions of pity? The same merciful Christ, who says, give of your abundance to those who have little, who bids you comfort the man who is unhappy, forbids you to add woe to woe, to build sorrow upon servitude, and to break down the heart of your bondsman, who has no help but from you, with scornful looks and galling words.

Man seizes greedily upon every little source of distinction, which falls within his reach; his perpetual effort is, to scrape together every consideration which can exalt him in his own mind above his fellow-creatures; and the unwatched tendency of all his thoughts is constantly to exaggerate the importance of his own claims and pretensions, and to diminish those of others. We are compelled to respect, in a considerable degree, the rights of our equals; but those of our inferiors, in this instance of language and manner, we sometimes cruelly neglect; and the man who is tremblingly alive to the preservation of his most minute privileges, who is ready in conformity with the notions of the times, to expose his life upon the least affront, or the least shadow of an affront, will trample without a moment of human reflection, upon the honest feelings of a fellow-creature who, though he never enjoyed the goods of fortune, partakes of the common sentiments of

our nature, and, in proportion as his lot of life is less enviable, merits from every good man a treatment more kind.

Do not let us fall into the hard-hearted mistake, that because men are born in a low station of life, and humbly educated, they have not a considerable and a powerful share of feelings. We think that humble men are to be moved only by a sense of gain, and that all usage is nearly indifferent to them, if their meat and drink, and clothing be the same; but there are many of them who would go from good fare to kind words, who would be content with a less pittance from the hand of a gentle and just man, and think with the proverb that it were better to dine off herbs, where love was, than to have a stalled ox, and hatred therewith. And have we never heard of servants, whom no reverse of their master's fortune had ever tempted to desert him? who have sacrificed the long-cherished hope of liberty, and competency in their old age, to follow a disgraced, an exiled, a needy man in all his miseries? who have given their body for his shield, and their hands for his support? and all this without the most distant hope of reward? And why?—not because he has fed and clothed them, (for the labourer is worthy of his hire, and recompense is rather justice than benevolence,) but because they have never been debased in their own eyes by scornful language; have never been goaded by unworthy treatment; because they have met with men who have not thought the feelings of their poor dependents too insignificant a subject for consideration and self-restraint; because they have been thought of, esteemed, and valued. These are the most acceptable gifts which one human being can bestow upon another, and when they come from him whom fortune and condition surround with dignity, to him who has nothing to command the respect of the world, from the master to the servant, they win the human heart, and form an attachment as indissoluble, perhaps, as subsists in the world.

Distinction of ranks there must be in every society, and it is most devoutly to be wished, that the good sense and firmness of this country may ever preserve them; but it is the peculiar province of religious instruction, to teach that considerate mildness which softens down the line of demarkation between the orders of mankind, which allays the natural discontent of inferiority by amiable concession, and renders the obedience of the lower classes certain and solid, by rendering it willing.

There is one very striking advantage in this amiable behaviour to our domestics for those who are engaged in the truly noble occupation of gradually correcting and improving their characters; it affords a constant exercise for the virtues of justice and moderation, and it is in the bosom of their families, and in the midst of those who are the daily witnesses of their actions, that men ought to render virtue habitual to themselves; but instead of rendering their home a school of probation and exercise, they too often look upon it as a place of rest from every noble effort, as a retreat, where they are exempted from the painful restraints of moderation, justice, and complacency. Hence it is that in these little subdivisions of society, in families, where the world is fenced off, where one roof shelters those whom nature intended to be so dear to each other, the nearest kindred are so often the constant source of each other's misery and inquietude; and hence it is that when we meet together in the world, we do not bring into each other's society virtues, but the symbols of virtues; we are not moderate, or just, or benevolent, but we counterfeit these virtues for the time being; and the actions of men are not here any proofs of amiable qualities, but of adroit and systematic imposture.

This unchristianlike conduct to servants does not always proceed from a bad heart; many are guilty of it who have much of compassion and goodness in their nature; but it seems to proceed from a notion early imbibed, never effectually checked, and aided by our natural indolence and pride, that a sense of those injuries which are conveyed by manner and expression, is almost exclusively confined to those whose minds are refined by education, or whose condition is ennobled by birth; but in spite of all the ills which poverty can inflict, no human being is base or abject in his own eyes. Without wealth, or beauty, or learning, or fame, nay, without one soul in all the earth that harbours a thought of him, without a place where to lay his head, loathsome from disease, and shunned by men, the poorest outcast has still something for which he cherishes and fosters himself; he has still some one pride in reserve, and you may still make his tears more bitter, and his heart more heavy; do not then take away from men who give you their labour for their bread, those feelings of self-complacency which are dear to all conditions, but doubly dear to this; do not take away that from thy poor brother, which cheers him in his toil, which gives him a light heart,

and wipes the sweat from his brow; and be thou good and kind to him, and speak gentle words to him, for the strength of his youth is thine, and remember there is above a God, whom thou canst not ask to pardon thy follies, and thy crimes, if thou forgivest not also the trespasses which are done against thee.

There is another point in which the masters of families do not fulfil this relation in a very exemplary manner, and that is, in attention to the moral discipline of their servants. The truth is, that if masters are well served, they busy themselves very little farther with anything else, and suffer many faults to pass unnoticed, which do not interfere with their own individual comfort; but is this the duty of a good member of the community, or of a good Christian? The master of a family has an opportunity of informing himself of the character of every individual in it more minutely than any other person can do; he derives a most important weight from his situation, and a little temperate, judicious and dignified advice from him, will reclaim many a thoughtless young person from destruction, much more effectually than any public and general instruction can be supposed to do. It is not easy to conceive anything more respectable, more useful, and more religious, than the conduct of a master of a family, who would condescend in this manner, to take into his hands the moral guidance of his servants, and to use his influence over them, and to make them wiser and better men. That these exertions would afford to anybody a most ample and abundant return, there can be little reason to doubt. Such a man would feel, in the first place, that most pure and perfect of all pleasures, the pleasure of doing good; he would be conscious that he had laid up against the hour of death and the day of affliction a store of complacent reflection, and many remembrances of a well-spent life; his too would be the singular fortune of uniting his duty with his immediate interest; for will any human being be long faithful to his worldly master, who has few and imperfect notions of any other? or can there be a greater security for faithful and ready obedience, than a mind solemnly impressed with notions of wrong and right, and roused to a love of virtue and a dread of vice?

There is not, perhaps, a more pleasant spectacle than a well-ordered family, where the good sense and benevolence of the superiors diffuse comfort and content to the meanest individual of which it is composed; where the kindness of the

master is reflected back in the alacrity of the servant; where command is dictated by reason, and obedience comes from the heart. There is here no contest whether one shall evade or the other exact the most; but generosity on the one side has begotten fidelity on the other, and two different orders of men are bound together in the common bonds of interest and affection. This house is the tabernacle of peace; here it is that virtue and religion love to dwell; and if the great God ever give us in this melancholy vale to taste one drop of heavenly comfort, in such a calm, wise and religious state that blessing is surely conferred; good, and surrounded by the good, making use of the superior situation to which fortune has exalted you, to influence your inferiors in the cause of virtue, suffering no bad, no indifferent character near you, but by the incessant efforts of benevolence and example, transmuting and subliming every heart into moral and Christian excellence; this it is to imitate our great Creator, who for ages has seen the nations of the earth gliding away under his throne, and the people mad with folly and crime; yet he has looked on, and spared us; we are not swallowed up; he is a merciful, and a good God, and he still shows us the light of his countenance, and he opens his hand, and fills all things living with plenteousness. Do thou, therefore, unto thy servants that which is just and equal, knowing that thou hast such a master in heaven.

SERMON XXXVI.

ON MEN OF THE WORLD.

Be not conformed to this world.—ROMANS XII. VERSE 2.

I SHALL dedicate my sermon of this day to the examination of a very common and a very complex character in society; that I mean of men of the world: a description of persons so far from having obeyed the injunction of the apostle, that they have received an appellation directly significant of their disobedience to it.

When vice stands by itself, we descry an enemy, and prepare for attack or defence; but vice, in union with agreeable qualities and accomplishments, presents an insidious combination, which requires the close attention of the religious instructor, because it veils the danger which it augments.

Strange havoc is made in our opinions by words; appellations frequently convey censure, or praise, which the ideas they signify certainly would not do; and definition seems as necessary in morals, as it is for any object of science. It is enough for the purposes of shame or honour, to get hold of certain phrases or terms; what is the real import of these words, and what good and evil they really convey, few people give themselves the trouble to consider; hence, if a loose expression be set up, significant of some popular qualities, the adjacent vices will soon connect themselves with these welcome guests, and bidding, under cover of their name, defiance to the indolent search made for them, they will share in common the indulgence and approbation of the world.

The appellation of a man of the world, can in strictness mean nothing more than a person who, by long mingling with his fellow-creatures, has acquired a knowledge of human nature, together with those habits and manners which pre-

vail in that cast of society which gives the law to the rest. Good manners and skill in character contribute so much to the general happiness, that this appellation of man of the world, would very justly confer popularity, if it were found to mean nothing more. It is not a knowledge of the world, properly so called, that can ever be the subject of condemnation in this place; to be ignorant of men can never be the way to live well amongst them; but those vices which have been fraudulently interwoven with this pleasant and important knowledge, should be torn off; we should toss out the asp which lies hidden in the fruit; death is a hard price for delight.

In the first place, the appellation of a man of the world, has become a protection for irreligion.

When I proceed to estimate the religion of a man of the world, no one will imagine me about to draw a very savage picture of severity and gloom; some little relaxation of self-denial will be anticipated, and some little deviation from unerring rectitude. It will be no story of the cowl, and the cloister, of the burning lamp, and the midnight prayer, of the altar ever charged with oblation, and the hymn ever sounding with praise: I do not mean to be unjust in the delineation of character; injustice of this kind is impolitic and immoral; but I am not afraid of being severe, while I confine myself to truth; we are placed here to remind, to warn, to detect, to caution, to entreat, to blame, and to praise; and that man is a traitor to the most sacred trust, who thunders grief and terror against awkward vice, and holds parley with pleasing error and popular sin.

A man of the world is rarely or ever seen in any place of public worship; a spirited and witty contempt for religion is the most gaudy, indispensable feather in his whole plume. If he happen not yet to have shaken off his religion internally, which in the beginning of his career may perhaps be the case, he must indulge only in furtive supplication, and retire to his own chamber, not to avoid the ostentation, but the imputation of piety. As a man of the world becomes older and more a man of the world, he may perhaps become a conformist, and comply with the outward ceremonies of religion, still taking care it is privately understood he is there to humour the world; that his contempt for these things is in no ways diminished; that he still thinks religion the business of women, children, and priests. His object is to impress mankind with a notion of his versatility; he insinuates that he

would fall in with the reigning worship wherever he might be placed, and change his adoration with his climate; and you cannot more effectually pique or punish his vanity, than by mistaking him for a devout man seriously impressed with the truths of religion. This singular and impious affectation proceeds from a desire of appearing to have escaped from those unsocial and unpleasant qualities with which religion is in our imagination so fatally connected; an association strengthened by that period of our history when irreligion was unfortunately the only test of genuine loyalty and elegant extraction. But this union between disaffection and devotion is now not only dissolved, but reversed, and religion is clearly no longer the parent of barbarous and austere manners. As far as it affects manners at all, it teaches the reality of every amiable quality, of which knowledge of the world teaches us to counterfeit the appearance, and changes a system of conventional fraud and sanctioned falsehood into a solid commerce of benevolence and mutual indulgence.

A man of the world, though he have no learned disbelief of sacred things, but rather an habitual carelessness concerning them, is still the author of much serious mischief to the cause of religion; he is always hovering upon the borders of consecrated ground, and watching his opportunity to make light and successful incursions upon it; and when the outworks of religion are attacked by a popular character, with humour and pleasantry, we are defrauded into a smile, or dare not stop the acclamations of contagious mirth with the warnings of deliberate and principled austerity; in the mean time, the reverential awe in which education has enshrined every holy thought, and every holy name, is gradually dissipated; and the best pledge of all that is valuable in character or admirable in action, trucked away with the ignorance of children for the graceful facilities and trifles of shameless, senseless, silly men.

The morality of a man of the world amounts to little more than prudence, and does not always come up to that: he is aware of the allowance that is made for him, and sins up to the full extent of his measure; he must be always ready to sacrifice his own life or to take that of another; in gaming, he must observe the strictest faith, and, in general, must abstain from all vices that are neither elegant nor interesting. With these limits he is let loose upon public happiness, to plunder and debauch, without penalty or shame. Take, for

instance, the happiness of a private family, as it depends upon the unsullied dignity and spotless life of its females; is there one of those whom we call men of the world, whom anything but fear would prevent from poisoning the heart, and laying waste the principles and virtues of women? Is there one who has religious magnanimity enough to scare this licentious cruelty from his soul? Is there one who would not blush to be suspected of such a virtue? And how often would the indulgence of the vice meet its punishment in the anger and the execrations of the world!

But though it be admitted that these, and many other bad vices, too often mark the character of a man of the world, "still," it will be urged, "he has his peculiar excellencies, as well as defects, and the former of these justify, in some measure, the admiration he receives, and give such a man a title to our love, if not to our esteem; one of these palliating virtues is certainly generosity." If a man of the world be generous, it must at least be allowed he is more frequently so with other people's property than with his own. The great check upon generosity, is the necessity of employing wealth for the ordinary wants of life; but he who lives in the world on free quarter, and defrauds a thousand honest men of their due, may toss away his bounty with a profusion, admirable enough to the multitude, but which, in fact, is the profligacy of a robber, not the generosity of a magnanimous man.

In all matters of compact or agreement, it is the invariable maxim of men of the world to take every advantage, which the ignorance of the contracting party, or the ambiguity of law, will permit; and this not more from avarice than from vanity, because, above all things, mankind must be impressed with a notion of this dexterity; and if he give way to a sense of generosity or justice, it will be presumed he has not seen the advantage he has relinquished.

Another source of distinction, to which this class of persons lays claim, is, an exemption from prejudices; a claim of such high importance, that I am afraid no class of men, and very few individuals of any class, are entitled to make it. A long commerce with the world, though it frequently extinguishes principle, seems only to commute prejudices. In the world, the prop of friendship is little wanted; the ties of blood forgotten, the ardour of youthful benevolence blunted; whatever amuses, is virtue; whatever tires, vice; a callous contempt for mankind dispensing with all active benevolence,

is riveted on the mind for ever; this is frequent enough in the world; but for prejudice, men reason as badly, and retain their opinions as obstinately in crowds, as in solitude; if a secluded man wants experience to correct his reflection, an active man wants reflection to infer justly from his experience; if the one be too little interested to observe minutely, the other is too much interested to observe candidly; so that there is nothing in the life of a man of the world, that should impart to his mind a greater degree of liberality, though his licentiousness, and indifference to all opinion, may frequently lead us to suppose so.

Nothing excites the ridicule of a man of the world more powerfully than any hypothesis concerning public virtue, or supposition that the mass of mankind are not a fair object of plunder and deception; you can hardly present to him a better opportunity for sarcasm, or a more decided evidence of your own pedantry and ignorance of mankind; to him, office and legislation are as much objects of sale, as the drugs or the spices of the merchant; he is ever ready to truck the public happiness for what it will fetch; and when he speaks of the importance of his trust, you may be sure he means to enhance the price of his treason. It is vain to talk of innovations, and to call out for a multiplication of checks in government; the root of the evil is the laxity of all public principle. From this school of the world, swarms of disciples will ever be ready to put to sale the wisest institutions, the ablest laws, and the most sacred trusts. Such are the idols of our admiration! Such the models to which the eyes of the young are directed, such the men before whom virtue is abashed, and wisdom still; who make us all blush for our rustic integrity, and plebeian faith.

It commonly happens, that a man of the world adds to his other bad qualities, those deep-seated and fatal vices which proceed from the love of gaming:—His taste for lawful and simple pleasure has long since given way to the emotions of passion; there exists in him a necessity for perturbation; he must ever be flushed with avarice, shaken with rage, or racked with despair; he must descend, in one short hour, from wealth to poverty, from raptures to curses; any tempest, any storm, to escape from the dull tranquillity of virtue, and the inflexible demands of duty.

The progress of opinions is curious and instructive. Vir-

tue is so delightful, whenever it is perceived, that men have found it their interest to cultivate manners, which are, in fact, the appearances of certain virtues; and now we are come to love the sign better than the thing signified, and indubitably to prefer (though we never own it) manners without virtue, to virtue without manners.

Men who have only this merit of exterior to plead, would be ranked with some greater regard to justice, if their judges were more governed by the suggestions of conscience and reflection, than by the tyranny of fashion. The universal object seems to be, not to do what we think right, but to do what is done, to avoid singularity; self-approbation, the vice-gerent of God, and legitimate monarch of our actions, is deposed. We voluntarily submit to the government of the multitude, obey the mandate we disapprove, and employ all the force of ridicule to make other people as slavishly irrational as ourselves. Without a certain disregard to the opinions of the world, or rather that mass of people engaged in dissipation, who call themselves the world, there can be neither wisdom of conduct, nor happiness the result of it. Singularity as a motive to action, has justly experienced all the ridicule it has received; singularity, as a necessary consequence of our obedience to the dictates of propriety and good sense, it is the duty of every man to incur, and if he cannot despise the ridicule consequent upon it, at least to bear it. Give this self-called world its full dominion over trifles, up to the very confines of morality, and religion, but not a step beyond; here make your stand, or be for ever lost. There is a latent sense of their own unworthiness in every multitude, in none more than in that called the world; they are ever ready to flee from the erect aspect of wisdom and of courage; they will begin with scoffing at your independence, and end with respecting it. Join with that world in the admiration of polish, refinement and urbanity; delight in that graceful mutability of soul, which takes its tone and tenour from every external object; in that subdued energy, which always charms, and never exceeds; in that learned exercise of talent which gives pleasure without exciting envy; in that pleasant despotism of courtesy, which makes every man a willing slave. But let not that sacred vigilance slumber, which watches over evil and good; the fairest of all things are religion, and virtue, for the want of which, all the accomplishments of the outward

man are wretched atonements; nothing can compensate for their absence ; no price, however splendid and imposing, can purchase that, which is above all human value, calculation and esteem.

The conviction which these plain and obvious remarks may carry with them, will be eluded by that common style of reasoning which gives vigour and duration to every possible fault. "A single example can do nothing ; the world will still go on as it has always done ; bad men will still find protecting names, and imposing pretences ; the individual who withstands it, will become ridiculous, the fault remain as popular as ever." The misfortune is, that this objection is made with bad faith, and can as well be answered by those who make, as by those who state it. No individual is called upon to bear the whole burthen of reform ; but the reform is to be effected by the sum of individual exertions ; of course, morality must always be stationary or retrograde, if we all resolve to contribute nothing towards the general improvement, because none of us can contribute much.

Those who have not strength of character to deviate materially from the customs of the world, in this patronage of folly and estimation of vice, need not go all lengths ; some scanty limits and some feeble shame they may still preserve, and watch over the crumbling barriers of virtue, which totter on their base.

Nobody of course can mean to say, that a fellow-creature ought to be the object of aversion, because he has mingled with great numbers, and great varieties of his species ; a thousand virtues may result from the school of the world which a speculative life can with difficulty infuse. An human being who has ever cultivated his understanding, and preserved an unspotted integrity amidst all the business of life, exhibits the finest model of character which this world can produce ; short of this, there are many who have had the good sense, or the good fortune, to conduct themselves with a decent propriety, which, in the spirit of Christian indulgence, may entitle them to the favour they experience ; but when the term of a man of the world becomes the pass-word to all society ; when the character is the admiration of one sex, and the model for imitation in the other ; when irreligious men, dishonest men, gamesters, seducers, adulterers, ungrateful sons, unjust husbands, neglectful pa-

rents, shameless, infamous women; when every polished assassin, and every accomplished impostor, find shelter and forgiveness for their crimes in this attribute of knowledge of the world, it becomes the imperious duty of every reflecting man to sift well this fatal, shuffling world, to be careful, as far as his own efforts and example extend, to make infamy and neglect the punishment of vice, and not to sanction with his name and society, an infamous, immoral character, though birth, wit, fortune and manners, all conspire to make it the idol of the world.

SERMON XXXVII.

ON THE FOLLY OF BEING ASHAMED OF RELIGION.

Whosoever, therefore, shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father, which is in Heaven; but whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father, which is in Heaven.—MATTHEW x. VERSE 32, 33.

THERE is no word which issues more frequently from the mouths of those who have no great fondness for religion, and the religious, than that of hypocrisy; indeed, it is with them so very common a word, that it may be questioned, if they have any other by which to denote religion itself. Whoever talks of religion is an hypocrite; whoever frequents religious worship is an hypocrite; whoever is alarmed for, or defends the interests of religion, is an hypocrite. Hypocrisy is the term, by which bad men endeavour to designate and to disgrace religion.

However just such imputation may have been in ages past, it is not now worth while to determine; religion might then have been held in greater honour among men, than unfortunately it is at present; and, as the reality was more precious, the counterfeit might have been more common; but applied to the times in which we live, hypocrisy is so far from being a frequent vice, that we much more frequently see men ashamed of the religion they do possess, than pretenders to any degree of it which they have never attained; the hypocrisy of impiety is a common vice, the hypocrisy of religion is not; it is most true that many men fear God, who would not have the world believe that they fear him; if the Gospel has its open enemies, it has too its timid friends, and it is not every one who would be pleased to confess to the world, the

vivacity of that hope, and the extent of that consolation which he derives from the religion of Christ.

To some this may seem a good sign; it may be urged that men are, therefore, better than at the first sight they appear to be; that there is more of real religion in the world, than the despondency of the pious and the good allows them to suppose; but this is a most mistaken view, for why is Christ denied before men, if that denial does not carry with it a certain appearance of bravery to the unthinking multitude? why are men ashamed of religion, if the name of religion does not convey with it some feeling of weakness and inferiority? why are the most beautiful, and the most solemn feelings of the heart suppressed if there is not a lurking, half-formed impiety in that mass of human beings, who are formed only by circumstances, and who take their morals and their religion from the temper of the times in which they live.

This shame of appearing too religious, proceeds principally from the fear of ridicule, of which ridicule unfortunately all things are susceptible, exactly in proportion to their dignity and grandeur. But young persons should learn at their first entrance into life, the secret of converting this ridicule into respect; the fool who laughs at you for your pious deportment, will redouble his contempt when he perceives that he is successful; take care that your piety is genuine, that it is neither fanatical nor superstitious; and when you have seen that it is good, persevere in it calmly and immovably; confess Christ before the world, not with the ostentation of a Pharisee; but with the firmness of a man; God, who seeth in secret, will reward you openly; and the very wretch who mocked you, will be the first to honour your courage and to respect your zeal. It is the greatest of all mistakes to yield one step of your life to the clamours of impiety; the enemies of religion are aware of the powerful weapon they wield, but they are also aware that they are injuring man and offending God; oppose them without insolence and without fear, and when you have repelled their aggression, you will, if that be any object, secure their respect.

But it may be asked, why we are bound to profess religion openly among men? Of what importance are those opinions which the world may form of our religion, if we really believe what religion teaches, and practice what it enjoins? But the fact is, we are not only bound to be religious, but to be religious in such a manner that we make others so; we are bound

to make the faith appear honourable among men; to give the timid courage to profess it; to let those who fluctuate and doubt, perceive that firmness of character which is derived from genuine piety; to teach those who would scoff us out of our religion, that we are walking above the world, that their scorn cannot reach us, but that if it did, we should be proud to bear every persecution malignity could inflict, to show our humble gratitude for all the religious blessings we enjoy.

But, perhaps I have gone too far in animadverting on this sinful shame of religion, before I have pointed out the most flagrant instances in which we are guilty of it. If, in such enumeration, I should mention any example, an individual instance of which may appear to be of little moment, remember what such instances would amount to, if they were common, and what a total corruption would ensue from the general neglect of such duties.

To come then to the ordinary scenes of life;—that man is ashamed of his religion who scruples to express his disapprobation of any licentious and blasphemous conversation by which it is attacked. It is not in the power of every one to reason; it is the privilege only of age or of authority, to rebuke; but every one can make others understand that he is displeased, that his finest feelings have been trampled upon, and his strongest opinion despised. It may poison vicious mirth, but it is the duty of every man to incur this temporary displeasure, and to offend by the rigour of his nature, rather than to sin by its facility.—This is one occasion for professing Christ before men; an occasion very arduous to a gentle nature, because it is necessary to run counter to the tenour of men's spirits, and to quench the vivacity of pleasure by a dignified and serious concern; but painful as it is, it must be done. Wherever we are called upon to promote the interests of man and the glory of God, by professing Christ before the world, if we deny him, he also will deny us on the judgment day: He, the only mediator between the dust and ashes which we are, and the God that gave them life.

To comply with any custom or fashion of the world, which we know to be in opposition to the precepts of religion, and to comply, merely, because we are averse to confess the power which religion has over us, is to deny Christ before the world, and to fear man more than God.—It is our duty at such time, not only to dissent, but to state the true reason for that dissent; to make it clear that we abstain from the action or dis-

sent from the custom, because it is religiously wrong, because God has forbidden it, because no man can, with any consistency, profess himself a Christian, and violate the plainest rules which Christ has taught.—This is antiquated language; there is nothing in it of that polished facility, which is perpetually crumbling away the ancient barriers of good and evil; but say it modestly, say it simply, say it kindly, say it from the bottom of your heart, and you will speak and act in the genuine spirit of a Christian; you will confess Christ before men, and in a great and a perilous season, he will confess you before our Father which is in Heaven.

The truth is, that men of refined taste are unwilling to confess the influence which religion possesses over them, from the apprehension that their motives will be mistaken; religion is sometimes a veil worn by hypocrites; sometimes it is an instrument for obtaining power; sometimes men make it a cloak for gratifying their resentments, and raise the cry of impiety against those whom they envy or hate; and sometimes religion degenerates into fanaticism, and works the utter decay of all the best faculties of the mind; all these imputations may be made against the man who professes Christ before the world; but you are not fit to be a Christian, if you cannot bear that your motives should be for a moment mistaken; take care that you do not use religion as the instrument of your ambition and your hatred; be not clad in the cloak of hypocrisy; beware of a mad and foolish enthusiasm; keep your hearts pure from the reality of these vices, and be sure that the imputation of them will never remain long upon you; but at all events tremble to deny Christ before men; but, when shame and danger are at hand, come forward and say, I am one of these, I am a Galilean, I was with Jesus of Nazareth; for if you deny him from the fear of men, the time will come when you will feel the anguish of Peter, and like him go forth, and weep bitterly.

To conceal even crime increases it, and men are inclined to extend some slight degree of indulgence to vices candidly confessed. But what indulgence have they for him, who blushes at the God to whom he prays? who disowns the supplication that has just been poured forth from his heart? Who struts away before men as a free and original spirit; and then casts himself down before that being, whom he knows to be the rewarder and the punisher of men, and from whose hand the thunder and the manna fall? As it will be

more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah, in the day of judgment, that never knew Christ, than for that city where he taught and died; so also it shall be more tolerable for the scoffer; it shall be better even for the fool, that says in his heart there is no God, than for him who looks up to a heaven that disgraces him; and pins his soul upon a faith, which he smothers as a crime. And what after all is this weakness that we are afraid of confessing before men? that in this frail and feverish existence we want the aid of religion; that where there are so many human beings, we are afraid to lose so much we wish to enjoy, and such little life to enjoy it; that we do venture to hope all things are regulated here by a wise and a just God; but this is not all; if the whole truth is told, it will turn out that we believe in another world, that we think the angel of God will come, and separate the wicked from the just; that the record of Christ, which is received by half the world, is acknowledged by us also; that under the impression of these truths, it is not to be denied that we do sometimes most fervently implore the pity and protection of the great God of the universe; this is what we would not have men know; these are the shameful discoveries which we dread to reveal to the impious, which would put an end for ever to all careless bravery about religion, and sink us at once in the estimation of the most profligate and abandoned of men.

Whatever we think or do, we are naturally induced to defend; our pride carries us to it, it is the genius of our nature; we often exceed the measure of right in obeying that feeling, but here pride is a virtue; inflexible perseverance is a great excellence, intrepid avowal is a sacred duty; we may give way to all that conviction that our cause is right, without the smallest possibility of any excess. We are placed in such a situation that we are promoting our salvation by adhering to our opinions, and performing one of the highest duties of religion, by defending the decisions of our understanding.

Lastly, we ought to learn something of intrepidity from bad men. There can be no reason why they, who believe that the soul perishes, should exalt themselves above us who have not abandoned the hope of an hereafter; it is a strange cause for increase of confidence that they consider themselves out of the protection of Providence; and the worst of all excuses for despondent shame, that we strive to model our lives and actions, after a pure law revealed to us from above.

It is a disgusting spectacle to see religion tinged with arrogance; but a consciousness of its own dignity, a resolution never to be shamed from its principles, a promptitude on all trying occasions, to proclaim them with increased firmness, and to put on even the spirit of martyrdom in their support, this spirit a Christian must assume; without it he is no Christian; for our great master has never taught us to be so humble as to yield up the truth of the Gospel to every invader that approaches, but teaching us in all other things, to be meek like him, he has taught us in this, to be firm like him, to bear witness to the truth, without any fear of men. And he has told us, if we deny him before the world, he also will deny us at the last and dreadful day, before the Father which is in Heaven.

SERMON XXXVIII.

ON INVASION.

Then said Judas Maccabeus, it is better for us to die in battle than to behold the calamities of our people, and our sanctuary. Nevertheless, as the will of God in Heaven is, so let him do.—1ST BOOK OF MACCABEES III. VERSE 59.

*It is not I believe in strictness, the practice of our church to seek for texts in the Apocryphal writings; I have, however, ventured to do so in this particular instance, to recall to your notice the books of the Maccabees;—a piece of history glowing with eloquence and piety, pregnant with good example, and applicable in the happiest manner, to the perils of the present time. These books relate to one of those positions of human affairs which awakens every good feeling in the minds of those who contemplate it, which, by the hidden energies it calls forth, and by the secret power which it has to make men better, and braver than themselves, communicates to history the vivacity and interest of romance. This, however, is the least important consequence of such history as relates successful resistance to tyranny; it is a luminous beacon to the world, a perpetual warning to mankind never to be oppressed; it teaches us in times like these, to measure force not by the numbers of men, but by the passions with which they are actuated, and the rights for which they contend. It shows us that all can be gained by courage when all seems lost; and that those who, like Judas, can feel that it is better to die than to suffer, may enjoy, like Judas, victory and renown.

* This Sermon was preached before a large body of volunteers in the Metropolis, in the Summer of 1804, when the danger of invasion was considered to be imminent.

Nor is it a slight thing, that by enforcing our belief in the moral order of the universe, such history teaches us to depend on Almighty God. When we see the immense armies of Antiochus defeated by a few of these bold Hebrews, and hosts that might have swallowed up the whole earth, broken to pieces one after the other, by the valour of this extraordinary man, we begin then to see that the world is safe; that there is a reaction of human passions, a mighty order, awfully planned, mercifully conceived, carefully preserved, by which the sum of human happiness is imperishable. From such consolatory examples as these, (in which, I thank Heaven no history is deficient,) when we have heard long of the reign of tyrants, we have the firmest confidence that God is preparing for us relief. No man can tell the hour and the day, but there is a secret and encouraging conviction that the time of liberation will at last come. God has said to the waves, thus far shalt thou go and no farther: we have the evidence of our senses that he is obeyed: I believe the same God has said to human passions, thus far shalt thou go and no farther; and that the feelings of men obey him like the waters of the sea. I believe it to be his eternal decree, that such tyrants as Antiochus shall at last raise up such heroes as Judas: and when I see the men of my own land coming out ready for war, as you are doing this day, I see the same marks of eternal order and wisdom, that has reared up the rocks to save us from the deep;—you are the barriers, and you are the rocks that limit unjust aggression, and ambitious violence; a nation of free men, sacramented together, a joining of all hands, a knitting of all hearts, the cry of the valiant Judas, that it is better to die! these make the boundaries of rapine and of desolation; at these awful signs the robbers of the earth are appalled, and dread lest they should have provoked mankind enough.

Such are the feelings with which we are naturally inspired by the perusal of this spirited history, in which the parallel to our present situation is so exact that it should be the manual of the times. But from this general eulogium on the history of the Maccabees, I must proceed to an examination of the particular text which I have extracted from it.

This sentiment of Judas was pronounced at the eve of one of the greatest battles which he fought; on the morrow he was about to commit to the chance of war the fate of the holy city

and of the chosen people; his address to his little army contains a morality which is simple, just and sublime. "Arm yourselves, (he says,) and be valiant men, and see that ye be in readiness against the morning, that ye may fight with these nations that are assembled together against us and our sanctury, to destroy us. For it is better for us to die in battle than to behold the calamities of our people and our sanctuary. Nevertheless, as the will of God in heaven is, so let him do."

In conformity then with the sentiment of Judas, I shall endeavour to state what those outward advantages are, which constitute the principal blessings of life, and under the privation of which, a wise man would cease to wish to live.

I pass over the herd of Epicurus, who would exist at any price, and under any complication of baseness and anguish. I am addressing myself to men who love a moral, not an animal life, a life not numbered by days, but by feelings and passions, and who know that there is somewhere or other a point of suffering when (if such be the will of God) it is better to die.

One circumstance, then, which much enhances the pleasure of life is liberty. Without liberty the value of life is doubtful; to see oppression without interference, to suffer it without resistance, to consider that life and property are at the mercy of one who has no more natural right to live or to enjoy than ourselves, is a source of the most bitter and unquiet feelings to elevated minds. For liberty, many have ventured their lives who knew liberty only by description. We have lived the life of free men, we have heard the name of freedom when we were children, and in all the relations of life we have found it to be more than a name. The enjoyment of it is so wrought and tempered into our daily habits, that any internal attempt to destroy the constitution of this realm could not succeed but by the most enormous waste of human life.—The name is too dear, the feeling too deep—the habit too inveterate; it would be easier almost to destroy this people, than to enslave them; and yet what are the sufferings of internal tyranny, in comparison with those of foreign subjugation: First there would be burnings, and massacres, and plunders; a promiscuous carnage of the English race: a thousand flames would burst forth in this venerable city, and shed their horrid light upon the dying and the dead; and when the sword had drank its full, and the flower of this race was per-

ished away,—then think of the silence of a land, over which an avenging enemy had passed; no loom—no plough—no ship—no tolling of the bell to church—no cheerful noise of the artificer—a land spent and extinguished, a people apostate to their ancient spirit and their ancient fame. If you think life worth having after this, if you will live when England does not live; if you will fawn at the feet of a foreign soldier, for a few years of existence; if you will put on the smiles of a slave, after you have worn the countenance of a free man, then live on, and may life be your punishment! You will remember when it is too late, the cry of Maccabeus, that it is better to die in battle, than to behold the calamities of your people and your sanctuary.

I would say that the happiness of life depends upon an unpolluted sanctury, upon a pure state of religion; without it, crimes multiply, laxity prevails in morals, society becomes a compound of fraud and voluptuousness; the motives for life are weakened: therefore Judas said well when he said, I will never see a polluted sanctuary.

Life becomes more valuable under a wise administration of good laws gradually elaborated by experience. It becomes more valuable in a cultivated state of the arts and sciences, more in a high state of commercial and agricultural prosperity of our country, more from its renown among the nations of the world: by all the wisdom that has been employed to make that country great and good, by all the lives that have been sacrificed to make it secure, by all the industry which has been exerted to render it opulent, by the deep tinge which it has received of the Christian character, by the number of those servants of God who have left in their lives and writings a great example to the people, by the rich presents which God has at any time made to it of men famous for their beautiful sayings and their genius: by this measure of value the loss of a country is to be tried, and by this measure we must decide whether it is better to die than to lose it.

There is another consideration to which Judas's magnanimous contempt of life may be applied: Born to higher and to better things, would you lead a life of manual labour? Would you cultivate the earth you once possessed, and if you could put up with such a life, could you endure it for others, whom you love more than yourselves? All this Judas had seen, and he declared it was better to die than to see it.

I have thus generally stated those exterior advantages

which give a value to life; now let me apply it to you, and bring it home to the chambers of your hearts. Do you feel that you are free men? Have you good laws? Have you a pure religion? Is England cultivated? Is it rich? Is it powerful? Is it renowned? Did you ever hear it had done great deeds? Did you ever hear it had nourished great men? I know that, but for the sanctity of this place you would answer with loud shouts and cries that all these things are so. Why then I say, in the hour of danger remember Judas, and think it better to die in battle, than to behold the calamities of such a people and such a land.

But in order to put on the spirit of Judas, we should know well that it will bear no backsliding, no wavering, no computation. The resolution once taken, we must advance, or we perish; we must not imagine that the danger will not come, and believe we are playing at magnanimity and heroism; the danger is pressing on against us with rapid strides; in a little time every man may be reminded of his threats, and his covenant of war and courage exacted at his hands; the lintel post of every door may be smitten with blood, and the loud cries of the helpless, the sick and the young may pierce our hearts. Be not deceived, there is no wall of adamant, no triple flaming sword, to drive off those lawless assassins that have murdered and pillaged in every other land; Heaven has made with us no covenant, that there should be joy and peace here, and wailing, and lamentation in the world besides; I would counsel you to put on a mind of patient suffering and noble acting; whatever energies there are in the human mind, you will want them all; every man will be tried to the very springs of his heart, and those times are at hand which will show us all as we really are, with the genuine stamp and value, be it much or be it little, which nature has impressed upon each living soul.

Having thus endeavoured to illustrate and enforce the leading principle of contempt of life, contained in the former part of this text, I pass on to its conclusion, and to the other striking part of the character of Judas, his piety. The most splendid writers of Pagan history have nothing equal to the speech of Judas before he fights with Seron and his host. "Then said Judas to his men: It is no hard matter for many to be shut up in the hands of a few; and with the God of heaven it is all one to deliver with a small company, or

with a great multitude. For the victory of battle standeth not in the multitude of an host, but strength cometh from heaven; they come against us in much pride and iniquity to destroy us, and our wives and children, and to spoil us; but we fight for our lives and our laws. Wherefore, the Lord himself will overthrow them before our face; and as for ye, be ye not afraid of them."

The different manner of the two people in making their attack, is solemn and affecting; may it be ominous. "Then Nicanor, and they that were with him, came forward with trumpets and songs; but Judas and his company encountered their enemies with invocation and prayer; so that fighting with their hands, and praying to God with their hearts, they were greatly cheered." You will listen more to such an example than to many precepts; our enemies mock at God, and say it is their own arm which getteth them the victory; let us ask the aid of him who breaketh in pieces the chariot, and snappeth the spear asunder; who is more to be feared than an army with banners. They may mock, but in truth the angel of God is ever present at the battle; his spirits and ministers hover over the danger; they receive the parting spirits of Christians; they listen to the distant prayers of kindred, and turn away the arrow from a father, or a child; without their knowledge, not one shall fall to the ground.

A greater contest than that in which we are engaged, the world has never seen; for we are not fighting the battle of our country alone, but we are fighting to decide the question, whether there shall be any more freedom upon the earth. If we are subdued, the great objects of life are vanquished; all reason for living is at an end. There remains a barren, vacant earth, from which every good man would beg of heaven that he might escape. But I have better, and brighter hopes; I trust in the watching providence of Heaven, in the manly sense, and the native courage of this people. I believe they will act now, as they have ever acted before—with undaunted boldness. I have a boundless confidence in the English character; I believe that they have more of real religion, more probity, more knowledge, and more genuine worth, than exists in the whole world besides: they are the guardians of pure Christianity; and from this prostituted nation of merchants, (as they are in derision called,) I believe

more heroes will spring up in the hour of danger, than all the military nations of ancient and modern Europe have ever produced. Into the hands of God, then, and his ever merciful Son, we cast ourselves, and wait in humble patience the result:—First we ask for victory, but if that cannot be, we have only one other prayer———we implore for death.

SERMON XXXIX.

UPON THE SPECIAL INTERFERENCE OF PROVIDENCE.

And when Paul had gathered a bundle of sticks, and laid them on the fire, there came a viper out of the heat, and fastened on his hand. And when the Barbarians saw the venomous beast hang on his hand, they said, this man is a murderer. But when they saw no harm happen to him, they changed their minds, and said he was a God.—Acts xxviii. 3d and following verses.

This lively picture of the judgments of the people of Melite, is a fair example of the general disposition of all multitudes, to ascribe the striking events of life to a particular Providence; to believe that every instance of prosperity is a reward sent from God; and every example of adversity a punishment emanating from his anger. The attack of the serpent the Barbarians could not attribute to accident; the slow effect of its poison, upon the body of the apostle, they were equally disposed to consider as miraculous; an action natural (though extraordinary) it could not be, but as the event varied its aspect, the unconscious animal had fastened upon a murderer, or wounded a god.

Such has been the disposition of mankind, in all ages, to judge of the interposition of the Deity. We must all remember, that at one period of our own history, a regular appeal was made to the immediate judgments of Providence, for the establishment of innocence or guilt. Such an appeal became the established law of the land; and the magistrates looked on to behold the innocent man walk upon the summit of the waters, or trample unhurt upon the burning iron. It has, in fact, ever been the tendency of human nature to liken divine justice to human justice in its most perfect shape, and

to suppose that he, to whom all hearts are open, would never suffer the just to perish, while the guilty prosper and live. Such ideas are very natural; nor is it at all difficult to understand whence they have originated, or why they have been so generally diffused; on the contrary it has required the experience of ages, and the endless repetition of precept, to wean mankind from these false and limited conceptions of divine Providence to convince them that the Creator has not formed himself after their model, and that the ways of man are not necessarily the ways of God.

Even now, it is the pious and the good that talk most of judgments; to say that an event was brought about by the special interference of Providence, is considered as the genuine language of religion, and to doubt it is to exhibit a cold and sceptical species of understanding. I will endeavour, however, to show that an habit of referring all the events of this world to a particular Providence, is a very dangerous habit, derogating from the power and wisdom of the Almighty, and exceedingly apt to expose religion to the scorn and ridicule of unbelievers.

In the first place, if we acquire the habit of speaking perpetually of judgments, and of referring everything to a particular interference of Providence, how are we to get over the present state of the world, as it exists plainly before our eyes? Is it the good only who are covered with blessings? Does this earth seem to be the inheritance of the just? Have we never seen virtue living and dying in wretchedness? Is it quite new to us, to hear of the unbroken prosperity of bad men, of the honours which they reach, and of the gratifications which they enjoy? Reconcile if you can, these appearances with your supposition of the perpetual interference of a divine Providence, and show us why poverty and anguish are not kept for the scourges of guilt alone; why the tears of the good ever fall down upon the earth; and why the just cry for the mercy of God. While you mean to be pious, in referring all to an immediate Providence, you are, in fact, depriving religion of its most powerful argument; it has always been said, you are not to look here for the rewards of righteousness; because God is just, and because men are not rewarded here according to their works, because we do not perceive a wise and regular system operating in the distribution of human happiness; therefore, we must conceive, that there is, beyond this life,

another system of existence where this apparent injustice will be corrected, and the happiness we enjoy be apportioned to the merits we possess. One of the most striking arguments for futurity, has been drawn from the absence of that particular Providence, from the suspense of those immediate judgments, for the existence of which, mistaken piety is so apt to contend.

By pretending that virtue and vice are so frequently punished and rewarded by the Deity, even in this world, and by struggling against the plain current of facts, you throw an air of ridicule upon religion, by compelling it to account for events under a false theory; religion is taunted with the high fortune of impious conquerors; men expect that we should explain why innocent and peaceful nations are massacred and rooted up; when they see that it is not always the good cause which prevails, but the strong cause, they fall off from God, and think lightly of that Providence which they do not find such as human error has described it to be. We know that God sees all; and that as the powerful language of Scripture says, the hairs of our head are numbered; that all things originate from God, we also know; but do they originate from the general rules he prescribes, or from a partial interference for each particular object? Is it a great law, for instance, prescribed from the beginning, that the excesses of the body should be punished by the pains of the body, or does the sudden vengeance of the Almighty smite the voluptuary with the disease which terminates a shameless and pampered life? Is it part of our original creation, that the pangs of remorse should follow guilt? or does God send upon every sinner this evil spirit of the mind for his present torment? That we are all under the guidance and omniscience of an Almighty being, no human heart can doubt; but the laws of that Almighty are grand, are simple, are few; nothing so derogatory to his nature, as to suppose that he is perpetually deviating from them, or that he guides one human being by many separate visitations of his power, though he governs unnumbered worlds by a single act of his will.

If a general law were not impressed upon the heavenly bodies, which guided them unerringly in their course; if it needed fresh interposition to renew their vigour, and to continue their direction, it would at once argue a want of power, and of foresight in their maker; but in the moral world, we

do not perceive how we are diminishing our notions of the Deity, by supposing his original plan of human affairs to be so imperfect, that he is always occupied in correcting it. If God does so often interfere to punish the guilty, why was not the original scheme of human affairs so constructed, that sin should produce misery with as much certainty as each fruit grows from its proper seed. If such is the case now, why are the immediate judgments of God necessary? but if we conceive such judgments to be so common, are we not guilty of impiety, in supposing the original plan of the universe to have been so imperfect, that the Creator of all is perpetually occupied in its correction?

We talk of judgments; but by what means are we to ascertain what is reward, what punishment, till we have seen the ultimate consequence of every event? Joseph in the dungeon knew not that he should be the lord of Egypt. Abraham, about to slaughter his son, never thought of the coming blessings of God. The wretched Daniel did not believe that he should be lifted up from among the lions, to be the chief servant of the eastern king. Many a soul has been saved to God by sudden poverty; many have been taught by diseases, and by the whisperings of death. Some wealth has ruined, some honour, some fame; we, who talk so arrogantly of God's judgments; alas, we know not when he blesses, when he destroys, whether he is about to humble us by apparent good, or to raise us up through the ministry of sorrow and of pain.

Another evil resulting from the perpetual supposition of judgments is, that it has a tendency to make success the measure of merit; if good and ill fortune are reward and punishment, it will be difficult not to infer, that that cause is just which is triumphant; that unjust which is overcome; a fortunate man and a good man will be synonymous terms, and unhappiness will be the infallible proof of sin; a method of decision pregnant with every evil, and against which religious and moral wisdom have in every age made the most decided stand.

This habit of judging of the designs of Providence, and of determining what are judgments, what ordinary events, is apt, I fear, to cherish a species of arrogance and persecution little compatible with Christian humility. From what power of divination do I pretend to say, that this man is a murderer, and that man a god? where is that communication with the

Divine nature, that gives me authority to pronounce the punishment of any human being to be miraculous, to say that God has singled out any one as the object of his preternatural vengeance, whose life, after all, may be wiser and better than mine? Let it be my care so to live, that the destroying angel come not forth against me. I cannot read the signs of Heaven in another's destiny; nor can I tell when nature moves on as she is wont, when the voice of God calls her from her ancient course.

After all, however, let it be remembered, it is only of the frequency and excess of this discovery of judgments, that a rational complaint can be made; that God did interfere, in Scriptural ages, with his judgments, we know from Scriptural authority; nor is it weak, or superstitious to conceive, that on the solemn epochs of human affairs, the judgments of God do now go abroad on the earth; and, that what looks all human, is sometimes the work of invisible power; but if you perpetually say, this is of God, and that of God, you do not glorify the Creator, but you dishonour the magnitude of those attributes, with which the piety of his creatures has surrounded his nature; you consider those rules which he has formed for the moral government of the world to be so imperfect, that they require perpetual correction, and incessant change; you erect yourself into an interpreter of God's will, and a judge of man's merit; but, what is worse than these, by teaching what is notoriously untrue, that God commonly interferes in this world, to punish the wicked and reward the good, you shake, in the minds of weak men, the very foundation of all religion, for they cannot live a year, or look with the most careless eye upon the fate of men, and empires, without perceiving that these things are not so; and then, with rash and headlong impiety, they doubt of a superintending Providence, because they cannot find that rapid and visible Providence which mistaken zeal is ever ready to perceive. All is noted down; nothing is forgotten; there is not a tear you draw down upon the face of a human being, nor a feeling of wretchedness you can strike into his heart, but what it is eternally recorded against you; no holy desire, no secret sin, are lost; in pain, in sorrow, in death, God is with us, but we may live on, untouched in our sin; the lightning shall not harm us, nor the pestilence lay us low; there is a second, and a retributive world, where our punishment will come; the closing scene, the true interpretation of this am-

biguous and distressing world in which we live; this, and this only, explains why those frequent judgments do not go forth, which it is so natural to man to expect; why the serpent is not armed against the murderer, and the impotent against the pious and the good. And let us gratefully remember, that while the doctrine of futurity explains the present endurance of evil, without recurring to the false supposition of perpetual judgments, this doctrine does not rest upon conjecture, is not invented to meet the difficulty, but is revealed to us in the page of Scripture, and confirmed by the death of Christ.

SERMON XL.

ON TRUE RELIGION.

True religion, and undefiled before God the Father, is this; to visit the fatherless, and widows in affliction, and to keep yourselves unspotted from the world.—JAMES I. VERSE 27.

OUR happiness in this life as well as in a life to come, depends so entirely upon the cultivation of rational religion, that the efforts to excite a just sense of its importance in the minds of every Christian congregation cannot be too frequently or too warmly repeated. Even since the revelation of Jesus Christ, man has too often worshiped his God by idolatry, by childish and absurd ceremonies, by tedious and despicable disputes, by the tears of chained heretics, by wasted provinces, by the burnt incense of human bodies; every vice and every error have been shrined in the name of religion, and the merciless inquisitor, while he blasted his most beautiful creations, did it for the praise and glory of his God.

These tremendous warnings should impress upon our minds the difficulty of attaining to proper notions of true religion; and though there have been, in these latter times, great improvements in our conception of it, there may be yet some remains of error, something which may escape our vigilant examination, and baffle the efforts of the most serious and most evangelical minds.

Under the term religion, are comprehended Faith, Devotion, and Practice; a belief in the existence of God, and Jesus Christ, our blessed Lord; prayer, public and private, and obedience to what we know to be the law of God, or what we believe to be his will.

First, in all our considerations of religion, we are too apt

to forget the ultimate end for which our Almighty Creator made himself known to us; we are weak enough to conceive that God is soothed by our praises, and gratified by our adulation; that the maker of a million of worlds can delight in the praises and hosannahs of perishable men; that any act of ours can illustrate his dignity or magnify his name; we believe that we are commanded to adore him, not to make ourselves good, but to make him glorious; not to set before that which is frail, a model of purity, but to brighten that which is pure by the breath of frailty.

From this, and from other causes proceeds that fatal and common tendency of mankind to exalt the devotional above the practical part of religion; and to relax in the real performance of what the Gospel enjoins exactly in proportion as they comply with the ceremonies which it institutes. Not that any but the lowest fanatics openly avow their neglect of practical, and their preference of verbal piety; but, that numbers are guilty of the error, almost without knowing it themselves, and certainly without feeling the smallest disposition to defend it in theory; it is contrary to the repeated declarations of the Gospel; it is derogatory to the attributes of the Deity to suppose that religion has any other object than the happiness of mankind; that Jesus Christ dwelt among men for any other purpose but to show them that rule of mortal life which leads them to life eternal; and all prayer and all devotion, should be resorted to for these objects as they remind us of that powerful being we adore, as they fix in our hearts the sage, rigorous and pure rules of morals which he has enacted, as they set before our eyes the straight path and narrow gate which lead to the dwellings of the just.

In the moments of self-examination, we must think what shall be hereafter; when we remember with satisfaction, that we were always on our knees in the temple, while others were pursuing the vain business, or vainer pleasures of the world, let us beware that we have something else to offer to our God but sainted words, and holy kneelings, and supplicating hymns; imagine not, that statute praise and written adoration can atone for a dissipated, selfish, uncharitable life, or that the postures of our bodies will be taken for the sin of our souls; mere devotion, barren of good actions, differs in nothing from the gross idolatry of Pagan worship; flocks and hecatombs are as good as gestures and words; they offered

up the blood of a victim, and you the breath of a man; you approach your Creator with the sound of pious melody, and they brought to him whom they thought to be their Creator, the sweet savour of burning spices. In what did the folly of these religions consist, but that they thought every idle object of sense more acceptable to the Deity than the firm dominion over bad passions and the noble exercise of aid and mercy to mankind? and how have they improved upon this error, who substitute adulation for obedience and constantly neglect the rule which they regularly recite? "Not every one," says our Saviour, "who sayeth unto me, Lord! Lord! but he that doeth the will of my Father, which is in Heaven;" in truth, the first condition of piety is much easier than the last; it is easier to cry Lord! Lord! than to do his will; it is easier to extol his attributes than to imitate them, even at the humblest distance; few would fail of immortality if the only price of it were devotion, and many would purchase on their knees, the privilege of sinning with impunity; it is not here that our nature is tried; this is not the proper ordeal of man. It is more difficult to forgive an injury, to embrace an enemy, to stop a bitter word, or to sacrifice a beloved pleasure to charity, than to repeat a liturgy of prayers; yet, remember the words: True religion, and undefiled before God the Father, is this,—to visit the fatherless, and widows in affliction, and to keep yourselves unspotted from the world. These are the real sacrifices to God; there is more joy in Heaven over one good deed, than over ninety and nine solemn supplications which bring forth no good deed.

At the same time, devotional religion is so necessary to practical religion, and so important, when considered as an instrument rather than an end, that it is impossible to conceive how an uniform tenour of good conduct can be supported without it; from the perpetual mention of the attributes of our Creator in prayer, we fashion in our minds that ideal model of excellence, which, like a flaming pillar, guides us through the wilderness of life; in prayer we are reminded of human misery; the hope of his future mercy, the persuasive example of Christ softens the heart hardened by business and pleasure; in prayer, all that is bad, and low, and base is forgotten; something which belongs not to this world is mingled with our nature, and the breath of God is breathed upon us. In prayer the seeds of action are sown; but let us remember we shall be judged by the fruit.

Men are not only tempted to prefer devotion to practice from the mistaken notion that it can of itself be acceptable to the Deity, and from the superior facility of praying like a Christian to that of living like a Christian; but because it is that part of religion of which the world takes the greatest cognizance; whereas the real question which every man should put to his own soul, is, not how often I have vowed to do good, but how often I have done it; not how often I have repeated the law, but how much I have obeyed it; not what I have promised, but what I have performed; for prayer without good action is nothing but increase of guilt, because it indicates how well we comprehended and how accurately we remembered the duty which we have neglected to discharge.

Another error to which we are exposed in our search after true religion, is that of intemperate zeal or enthusiasm; an error which often leads to the lowest and most contemptible fanaticism; often terminates in melancholy, in madness, or in voluntary death. The passions have too mighty an influence on religious opinion, not to render it necessary that they should be suspected and watched. Hope,—fear,—gratitude,—despair,—and every powerful principle of our nature, may all be called in to the aid of fanaticism; artful men, or mistaken and enthusiastic men, can always corrupt some one passion by the allurements of religion; and, by that unguarded avenue, find their way to the inward heart. When once men substitute for simple, intelligible rules of right and wrong, the notion of extraordinary impulse, mysterious feeling, religious instinct, and, in general, any preternatural and mysterious affection, reason looks like indifference, and common sense appears to border upon impiety; extravagance becomes the test of godliness, and nothing is considered as acceptable to the Deity, that is not laughable and contemptible to the rational part of his creatures.

There is, in truth, a vitiated appetite in our nature for mystery and terror; we are disappointed by simplicity; we nauseate that which is common, and despise every thing which we comprehend; the languid mind must gaze at something in the distant ground, half visible, half in shade; an object half pleasing, half terrible, full of promise, and full of threat; lovely and hateful; incongruous and impossible. We are so desirous of involving religion in mystery, that we are displeased at finding it so clear in its nature, and so definite in

its object; we require a more splended and magnificent servitude; we despise the waters of Israel, and pant for Tabana, and Farfar, and the mighty rivers of Damascus.—But I may ask with the Prophet, if God had bid you do some great thing, would you not have done it? How much the rather then, when he sayeth unto you, have mercy and be clean; how much the rather then, when he sayeth unto you, comfort the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep yourselves unspotted from the world.

In our religious progress, we are menaced by two opposite evils,—indifference, and fanaticism,—which, like all contrary excesses reciprocally generate each other; the horror of indifference inflames ardour; and disgust at extravagance increases indifference; of the danger of the former, I hope I think as seriously as any minister of the Gospel can do; and I have on other occasions, in the discharge of my duty, insisted upon it, as well as I was able;—that I have not unduly magnified the latter, a very slight acquaintance with the history of religion will sufficiently evince.

To this head of intemperate enthusiasm is to be referred that eager reception which the interpretation of prophecies has, of late days, experienced among us.—There are some prophecies so plain that they cannot be mistaken, and so important, that they have very properly been insisted upon, as the strongest proofs of our religion; but the endless attempt at fresh interpretation and the desire to apply passages from the Prophets to the political events of the present times, should surely be received with the greatest caution; because it is a subject above all others, in which the passions of weak, timid people may betray their judgment, and because it is notorious to common sense, that to support such interpretation, the language of the Prophets has been distorted in the most violent and uncandid manner. Far be it from me to blame the attempt at farther explanation altogether; I only contend, that it is an attempt which should be made with the greatest humility and received with the greatest caution; at the same time, I have no scruple to say, that this practice has, of late years, been carried to the most blameable and pernicious excess; predictions of the most trifling events have been sought for, and discovered in the Prophets, and the credulity of mankind abused in a manner which has given a fresh handle to infidelity, and cast unmerited obloquy upon true religion; true religion, which is always sure to suffer for the errors and absurdities

which the superstitious ignorance of man is perpetually fostering upon it.

As true religion consists neither in devotion alone, nor in fanaticism at all, it does not consist any more in theology, which we are apt to confound with it; the danger is that we mistake the means and instruments by which we are to make ourselves religious, for religion itself; theology and prayer are instruments of the highest importance to the furtherance of true religion, but they are still different from religion itself. The ambiguities consequent upon translation, the inevitable difficulties of words considered as a vehicle of thought, the proceedings of the Christian church, down to this period, the evidence in favour of Christianity, the questions which must arise from the application of a general rule to particular cases, have all made it necessary, that the Scriptures should be profoundly and accurately studied, and have given birth to the science of theology; but Almighty God in revealing to us his Gospel, would have defeated his own benevolent purpose, if everything which that Gospel contains, might not be apprehended without laborious and critical study. Upon the more important and practical parts of Christianity, there has been little or no controversy; every body knows that mercy, that charity, that meekness, that obedience to the higher powers, that every fundamental principle of morals, on which the happiness of mankind reposes, are taught in the sacred writings, with a strength which rivets attention, and a precision which excludes mistake. It is right that more speculative questions should be agitated by those to whom these matters are properly and professionally a care; but it never could have been the intention of all-wise Providence, that subjects difficult enough to exercised understandings, should be a necessary and indispensable matter of thought and inquiry for every well disposed Christian.

I have thus endeavoured to caution you against a few of those errors which vitiate our conceptions of true religion; and teach us to sacrifice the substance to the phantom and shade of piety. If any other proof were wanting of the Divine origin of Christianity, this alone would be of the highest importance; that it is the only religion which does not degrade our notions of the Deity, by investing him with the lowest of human passions. The Pagan sacrificed his milk-white heifer, without blemish, cast frankincense on the flame, and went forth justified before his God. The Mahomedan

bathes in the stream, and turns nine times towards holy Mecca, and is cleansed from all his iniquities:—the meek and patient Hindoo eateth not of that which has life, and blesses his beloved Ganges, and these things are counted unto him for righteousness. The Christian must offer up to God some heart that he hath lightened, and some spirit that he hath made glad; the prayers of sick, wretched creatures, must go up for him to heaven; he must come to the altar, surrounded by fatherless children; his enemies must lie prostrate at his feet, conquered by gentleness, goodness, and forbearance; he must give to the reviler, blessings for curses; he must be the defence of those who seek his destruction; he must avert wrath with lovely, peaceable words; by his wise discourse, and by his fair honourable life, he must turn men from their sins, to the worship of the Lord their God. This is the piety of a Christian; this is the path which leads to immortal life; to have a lively faith, to pray always for blessings from above; but to remember in the midst of our prayers, that true religion and undefiled before God the Father is this, to visit the fatherless and widows in affliction; and to keep yourselves unspotted from the world.

SERMON XLI.

ON THE IMMORTALITY OF THE SOUL.

But some man will say, how are the dead raised up? And with what body do they come? Thou fool! that which thou sowest is not quickened except it die; and that which thou sowest, thou sowest not that body which shall be, but bare grain, it may chance of wheat or some other grain; but God giveth it a body as it hath pleased him,—and to every seed his own body.—First book of Corinthians xv. verse 35.

He who looks at any object of matter, can scarcely be said to know at what it is he does look if he confines himself only to its present qualities and neglects the indications of its future existence.

Look at the seed; does it move? Is there in it the slightest sign of life? Could any man conjecture, previous to experience, that it would not always remain what it now is? yet, of that seed comes the green herb; man gathers of it his daily bread; or if such be its body, it riseth up to be the strength and beauty of the forest.

The principle of change is indeed widely diffused over the works of Providence; few things are in that state now, in which they are hereafter to remain; the bird destined for the air, sleeps in his shell; the beautiful insect, that is to flutter in the sun, crawls in the earth till the season of his glory is come. The child that requires the hand of a parent to give him food, may soon be changed into a saint or a sage. So, also (says the great apostle) is it with the soul of man; this is not its resting place; it was never intended to remain here, and to be always as it now is; it will be changed as the seed is changed; the corruptible will put on incorruption; the mortal immortality; the object for which it was created will be made manifest; at the very moment that it seems to perish, it is passing

into an higher order of creatures and getting hold of a better life.

This comparison between the outward world and the changes of the soul, set on foot by the holy apostle, may perhaps be carried one step farther.

As we are admonished by experience of this propensity to change in all the objects we behold, we accustom ourselves to look out with eagerness and attention for the signs of these changes; we say of the seed, when it begins to burst this part will become the branch, and from hence the root will grow; we trace out in the shell, the organs of the perfect animal; and we say with certainty, these are preparations for a future existence; to this perishing seed, to this inanimate shell they are useless; but the seed will grow, and the shell will live; these are the signs in them of a second state; they have other appearances to put on, and other objects to accomplish, to which their present being is entirely subordinate and ministerial: this also is true of the soul of man; it does not do all here that it was intended to do; it was never modeled for this world alone; there are in it qualities utterly useless here, qualities which carry about with them the signs of preparation, as if that soul was to undergo a great change, surviving the body, and living for ever before God.

There cannot be a more awful speculation than to follow out this train of thought, and to endeavour to find what those qualities of our minds are, which appear to have a reference to some future scene of existence, which by showing us that we are intended for another and a better world, add the natural evidence for immortality, to that which is derived from the Christian revelation.

First. It must be observed, man in every stage of society, civilized or savage, has universally believed that he is to live hereafter; we have no sooner become acquainted with the opinions of any new people, however barbarous their condition, however remote and insulated their situation, but we immediately discover among them this sacred notion of a second life; discover it obscured by foolish inventions, disgraced by superstition; but still discover it shining through the dross and betraying its excellent nature. Why then has the Almighty God, who in all other creations is acknowledged to do nothing in vain, who could have pinioned down the mind within any limits, given it such a range, that its thoughts reach up to an Heaven where it can never dwell? why is it

enabled to discover a God if that God is to doom it to annihilation? why has it the power to draw a never-ending scene of happiness, if it has but a few wretched years to live. What advantageth us, says the apostle, if the dead rise not at all; let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die; but alas! the mind of man is not so constituted; the death of to-morrow ruins the appetite of to-day; the beast that perishes he only is pleased to the last, and is never troubled with that futurity, by which he is never to be blest; believing that God exists, that God is our maker, that God is just, we cannot believe that he has given us minds capable of forming the notion of immortality, but unworthy of enjoying immortality itself; therefore, this universal belief in a future state, is one sign of change, one proof that the soul is not now in its last stage of being, that the change which it undergoes, is merely change and not destruction.

If we had been destined for this world alone, it is probable we should have been contented with what this world affords; the excellence we saw and felt, would have been the only excellence we could conceive; but now man always imagines something better than he sees; no grandeur, and no beauty which he beholds, are equal to the grandeur and the beauty which he conceives; something tells him this is human, that elsewhere there are fairer and better things than these; in all times man has delighted to draw a natural and moral world after his own fancy; a land without storm and tempest; a people without violence and injustice, living in perpetual peace, and exercising unwearied benevolence. This discontent of present things is made a part of man's nature, to remind him that present things are not always to endure; he is swift to conceive better things, to inure him to that perfection, which must infinitely exceed even his imagination; if man is to live again, the object of such a provision is easy to be comprehended, and worthy of Almighty wisdom; but why is it given, if all ends here? why are we so keen to discern the imperfections of this our first, and last, and only home? a being of this world has no need of it, it is a mark of futurity, the forerunner of another world, the strong evidence of an immortal being.

To exist in this world, seems to be the only purpose for which the brute creation was intended; they eat, and drink, and perish; nor does it appear that they have any superfluous faculties, any portion of understanding greater than what is necessary for the preservation of their brief existence; if

they have lived a few years, and given birth to other beings like themseves, they appear to have done all that Providence ever intended them to do; if man, like these, had only talents to gather his support, and defeat the hostile animals which surrounded him, no hope of immortality could be gathered from a condition like this; man would be of the earth, earthy; destined to live in this world, with qualities fitted for this world, and, to all appearance, limited to it; but in speaking of the mind of man, we forget and we leap over all those faculties, which are sufficient for the preservation of life; we do not wonder at man, because he is cunning in procuring his food, but we are amazed with the variety, the superfluity, the immensity of human talents; we are astonished that he should have found his way over the seas, and numbered the stars, and called by its name every earth, and stone, and plant, and creeping reptile, that the Almighty hath made; we see him gathered together in great cities, guided by laws, disciplined by instruction, softened by fine arts, and sanctified by solemn worship: we count over the pious spirit of the world, the beautiful writers, the great statesmen, all who have invented subtlety, who have thought deeply, who have executed wisely, all these are proofs that we are destined for a second life; it is not possible to believe that this redundant vigour, this lavish and excessive power was given for the mere gathering of meat and drink: if the only object is present existence, such faculties are cruel, are misplaced, are useless; they all show us that there is something great awaiting us, that the soul is now young and infantine, springing up into a more perfect life when the body falls into dust.

Then, why is it that there is always a progress from one novelty to another? why does happiness recede before us as we advance? why is man driven by the present moment to a future, which, when it comes, still beckons him to a future beyond? In boyhood it is to be youth, in youth it is to be manhood, in manhood it is to be old age; but in youth pleasure wearies, in manhood power fatigues, in old age sadness and weakness oppress,—till man is wearied out by the long delusion, and sees at last, if he would reach that happiness he has so long pursued, he must follow it over the great gulf across which Dives called to Lazarus for aid.

God would not have so framed the heart of man if that heart is perishable and mortal; it is not one God that has made the invisible spirit, and another God that has made all

the objects we can see and touch; but one Omnipotence and one Omniscience has acted throughout, in forming the most stupendous mind, and in completing the minutest insect. If this incessant change be then the quality of a soul which is to suffer death; if our desires can here find no resting place and are not to exist anywhere but here, where is there besides such an inconsistency in all the other works of God? No animal has wings that is not destined to fly; every creature that swims in the deep has all the organs and instruments necessary for that kind of life; when we look at the courageous animals, we are well aware that they must live by their courage; of the timid we do not doubt but that they are to owe their safety to their circumspection; we always assign to Providence a purpose; we cannot look upon a bodily organ or witness a mental quality, without assigning to them a particular use; if the present use is not obvious, the creature is to undergo some change that will justify the work of God, and bring that organ or that quality into action; this half-living reptile that is now crawling on the earth, will not end in this state; those rudiments of wings will expand, and he will become an inhabitant of air; thus we reason of all nature, and thus we should reason also of the soul of man; this eternal change, this sickness of present things, this appetite for the future, these are the marks of the wings, and the signs of the great flight; this is not the world to which they belong, but they are the instruments and the organs which enable us to detach ourselves from this world, and to spring up into greater purity and freedom.

Of the other qualities of the mind, there is no one who doubts; the connection they have with this life cannot be mistaken; resentment is given us for protection; fear for preservation; hope for comfort; compassion for mutual aid; gratitude for the encouragement of benevolence,—all these are present qualities; some beautiful, some bad, but all calculated for the present scene; all bearing upon our immediate destiny, all connected with this world; but the knowledge of God and his attributes, the ungratified notions of excellence, the impatience of present things, the unwearied appetite for change; the lavish, variety and splendour of the human faculties; all these things are not to be explained but by believing the soul to be immortal, or the God that made it to be unjust.

There is one other, and an almost universal passion in

human nature, which appears to be planted in us to excite and to cherish, the feeling of the immortality of the soul; the desire of being remembered and honoured after death; or, as it is commonly denominated, the love of posthumous fame.—All men feel it; it would overwhelm any of us here present with the deepest affliction to believe that we were utterly forgotten when we ceased to live; after religion the great soother and comforter in death is, to believe that we shall survive in the memory of those whom we leave behind. If this passion was a passion only of the rich and great, it might proceed from a reluctance to quit those enjoyments which are said by the son of Sirach to make death so terrible; but all men have it; the poor wish to live in the memory of the poor; the wretched to be remembered even by the wretched; anything but to be forgotten and blotted out, than which there is nothing more awful to the mind of man; for what purpose is it then, that our wishes shoot out beyond our endurance, and that we have such an irresistible tendency to paint ourselves as conscious of honour or of shame after the outward and visible man has perished away? This universal feeling was not given in mockery and derison of mankind; he is surely not allowed for the sport of some higher order of beings, to hope so strongly that which is impossible; this peculiarity of his nature is not accidental; it was not overlooked in the structure of his mind, but it was placed there with design, and placed there with benevolence; with design, because nothing in this world is done without design; with benevolence, because man wanted this glimpse of another life for his happiness, and he wanted it for his elevation to give him courage under all the evils of the world, and to whisper into his inward soul that he only is unchangable amid vicissitude, and imperishable amid decay.

It is a science not unworthy of time and attention to find out what the qualities of our minds are, and for what purposes they were intended; but it is impossible in the prosecution of this study, not to perceive that the mind with all its worldly attributes, has some qualities entirely destined for futurity; arranged for a totally separate order of things; doing within us the service of Heaven, and watching carefully over the ark of God which every man carries in his heart; therefore, do not answer me with saying all this perishes to the eye, it seems as if the soul was dead; I reply with the holy apostle, it is the great law of nature, that which thou sowest

is not quickened except it die; and that which thou sowest, thou sowest not that body which shall be, but God giveth it a body as it hath pleased him, and to every seed its own body.

The season is now come when those changes to which the apostle alludes begin to take place; the sower has deposited the seed in the ground, and to the outward eye it seems to perish; yet, ere it be long, it will be green with life, and God will give to every seed the body which hath pleased him; let it be our care then, to derive from the changes of nature, a lesson of religious wisdom, and beholding the decay and the resurrection of the outward world, to remember before it is too late, that we also must die and rise again.

SERMON XLII.

ON THE PLEASURES OF OLD AGE.

Though the outward man perish, the inward man is renewed day by day. 2d Book of Corinthians iv. verse 14.

There seems to be, upon a superficial view of human life, a vast inequality in the advantages enjoyed at its different periods; all its joys and pleasures appear to be crowded into the season of youth, and its last scenes to be given up to pain, and to decay; to be marked only by the dissolution of the body, and the gloom of the mind. Sad, forsaken, unhappy, are the epithets appropriated to old age; to grow old stands foremost upon the catalogue of human miseries, and sin itself seems less terrible than that outward ruin which brings man down to his native dust.

To correct, if I am able, these mistaken views, and to strive against this mournful and degrading impression, I have cited these words of the great apostle; they show us that the real glory may be greatest, when the visible glory is no more; that death and ruin may be without, and immortality within; that, though the outward man perish, the inward man may be renewed day by day.

I will endeavour to explain what is meant by this renewal of the inward man by stating what those feelings of the mind are, which St. Paul sets up in compensation of bodily decay, and in what sense we may be said to be daily renewed, when it is but too evident to the eye, that we are dwindling away to another state of existence. The principal object I have in view in this discourse, is to prove that Providence has been bounteous to every period of life; that the pleasures of age are greater, and the pains less, than we commonly suppose

them to be; and that, when old age is a state of affliction and despair, it is not rendered so by a decaying body, but by a sinful mind.

By the pleasures of old age are understood, of course, those pleasures which may be attained by exertion; for gratuitous happiness is never conceded to man at any period of life; but in youth, in manhood, in old age is alike, and alone gained by doing well, and by faith in Christ.

The first renewal of the inward man, the restoration of our nature to what it was before its original transgression, is its victory over the passions of youth. The eye fails, the hand trembles, and the knee is unstrung; but the happiness of man does not depend only on the keenness of his sight, and the vigour of his grasp; it is not all health and strength; there is something which palsy cannot reach, nor fever burn, nor agony impair. The man whom you pity for his weakness, would be loath perhaps, to change his infirmities for your passions; he would not be as young as you, to be disturbed as you; he would not come again under the bondage of sin, and be the slave of passion for all the happiness that youth, and beauty, and strength could give; he has calmed every unholy tumult; and put to rest every sinful emotion; he wishes only that which is righteous; he thinks only that which is good; he feels by day and by night a calm supporting confidence in God. Youth may flee away unheeded, if old age bring with it such blessings as these. The outward man may perish, when the inward man is thus renewed day by day.

The pleasures of youth all fall under the cognizance of the senses; gayety is heard, and brilliancy is seen; but the passionless tranquillity of old age is unnoticed by all but those whom it blesses; we call it unhappy because it has no clamorous, and no visible joy; forgetting that the emanation of God's grace, the feeling of heaven, the strong hope of immortality, are themselves deep and penetrating joys, which occupy the whole man, and keep his soul in dignity and peace.

Nor is this exemption from the tumults of sense, and the agitations of sin, to be judged of, as if it were original apathy; but it is a tranquillity of which old age can fully ascertain the value, from having experienced the contrary state. He, whose decaying health is the only circumstance you notice, has learnt in a long life to estimate aright the happiness of age; he has learnt that your ideas of pleasure are not the

true ideas of pleasure; he once obeyed feelings as impetuous as yours; he was the slave of anger, of jealousy, of pleasure, as you are at this day. He has now conquered the passions which he once served; and pity him as you may, he feels that the latter days of his life are better than the first; that it is more pleasant to walk with God in old age, than to sin in all the flower and freshness of youth.

The memory of a well spent life is a pleasure which may always be reserved for old age, and can be enjoyed by old age alone; in manhood the race is only half run, the firmest virtue may give way, and that fame may set in clouds which rose in beauty, and shone with meridian splendour. But in old age the hand is upon the goal, the destined spot is reached; nothing more is to come, and what is past the malice of fortune cannot affect. Nor is this pleasure peculiar to old age, by any means confined to men of illustrious talent and exalted station; the consciousness of integrity and honesty is as sweet as the remembrance of the brightest actions; the pleasant feeling, the true delight is to know when the part is finished, that the part has been acted aright, that however inconsiderable our best exertions may be, they have still been made; that we have a right to challenge the approbation of men, and to ask for some little portion of the mercy of God.

The aged, in fact enjoy some of the privileges of the dead; they experience that justice, which those who are actively engaged on the theatre of the world so seldom receive; envy for them is dumb, the worst passions of the human heart are softened by the signs of decaying nature, and men begin to love that merit which they are so soon to enjoy no more.

The respect which an old man experiences, who has quitted the world with honour, is sincere and affecting; he has been well tried, and the degree of his virtues fairly established; he is now no man's rival, and all are left freely to indulge in the admiration of excellence; a man thus far gone in existence, does not convert the homage of his fellow-creatures into food for vanity, but takes it deeply to his heart as a probable evidence that he has discharged his duties well, and that at the last hour, he may find some favour with his God. In this manner a good old man learns from the praises of the world what he has been; and the young, inflamed by the sight of living excellence, love virtue and steadily pursue it.

There remain for an old man the pleasures of knowledge, the result of all that he has gathered in a long and laborious

life, and the liberal communication of that knowledge to others; wisdom and knowledge are the attributes of age; and if the young bow to the symbol of declining life, it is in a great measure because they regard them also as the symbols of a long-disciplined and wide-inquiring mind.

There remains to old age, to behold children acting an honest and conspicuous part in the world; carrying into action those sound and moderate principles, which it has been the object of parental care to inculcate; and repaying to the last days of the aged that kindness which guided their infant life. Youth has its glories and pleasures, but they are not the saddest days of human life, when a man wastes gradually away, in the midst of his numerous and happy children; perishing, like the patriarch, in a good old age, and blessing his sons, the strength and hope of Israel.

But this it is, for which we deem old age miserable; that the pleasures of old age are not our pleasures: that the old man cries out with Bazillai, "How long have I to live that I should go up with the King to Jerusalem? I am this day four-score years old; can I discern between good and evil: can thy servant taste what I eat? and what I drink? Can I hear any more the voice of singing men, and singing women? Let thy servant, I pray thee, turn back, that I may die in mine own city, and be buried in the grave of my father, and of my mother?" It is this, the tasteless meats, the deafness to the singing man and the singing woman, the apathy to common pleasures, for which old age is pitied and deplored. But this is God's mercy, it is not his vengeance; he deadens the keenness of our bodily senses only to guide us to immortality; we are disgusted with the pleasures of youth; we deride the objects of manly ambition; we are wearied with one worldly trifle or another, that our thoughts may centre at last in God; if I saw old age still hovering after the amusements of youth, I should indeed pity it, but this oblivion of our trifles, is the genuine sign that the great change is coming. This loathing of the world shows us, that the renewal of the inward man has begun; that the first state will soon end; that the wings are now forming for the last and great flight; and that we are casting off the appetites and passions of this world, only because we are about for ever to abandon it.

Another evil that our imaginations are apt to connect with old age, is pain; but it is not the natural and inevitable condition of human life, that it should close in pain; a youth of

intemperance, is crowned with an old age of bodily suffering; there is no wretchedness of mind or body, which we may not prepare for old age: but the accidental consequences of our sins, are not to be considered as the regular conditions of our nature; there is a gradual bowing down to the grave; a gentle departure from this life; a peaceful separation of the soul from the body; which is the real destiny of man, when he has lead that life which his Almighty Creator intended him to lead.

In fact, the old age which has raised all this terror, is the old age of sin, not the old age of piety; it is the spectacle of young and ungoverned passions, in a perishing body; of a man giving up the world by his trembling limbs, giving it up by his wasting strength, and clinging to it with all the appetites of his heart; a man marked deeply by time, and outwardly fitted for Heaven, within all preparations for this life, and with thoughts busied about the mortal pleasures of sin; to such a man, old age is indeed terrible, for it is a mark of the coming vengeance of God, the pains and evils of the body are to him signs that his eternal punishment is near at hand; that he is standing in the threshold to the place of torment. I am not endeavouring to prove that this old age is not terrible. It is, indeed, the greatest of human terrors; and though the threescore and ten years may first pass away, yet the knowledge that it must come at last, shoots across the horizon of life, and mingles the terror of God with the early pleasures of youth.

If it is the mere contiguity to death, which makes old age so terrible, find out, if you can, the man who would spend his life over again. If your life has not been notoriously wicked, so that death becomes to you the greatest of all evils, put this question to your own heart. You shall be replaced in earliest infancy, you shall enjoy all the happiness which is said to be the privilege of that favoured period; you shall re-taste again, all the tumultuous pleasures of youth; you shall play over again the game of ambition. If all this were offered, all this would be rejected; your disposition would be, to go on with the portion of life which remained; to pass over to something you did not know, in the hope of finding it better; not to return to that, with the value of which you were already acquainted. Why then is the proximity to death so terrible, if the possession of life is so little valuable? Why fear to die, if we do not wish to live? Death viewed

at a distance by one unprepared for it, from having lived long, is terrible; but the natural feeling of the mind, in extreme old age, is to wish for death; to ask it of God as a boon, to speak of it as a release, and to ardently desire what, in the beginning of life, is considered as the greatest of all evils. "As the hart panteth for the water brooks,—even so longeth my soul for thee, oh God."

It is in truth, this very proximity to death, which in a rightly-constituted and Christian mind, gives sometimes to old age a superiority over all human conditions, because it brings with it a feeling which we find to be that which we have been seeking for throughout the whole of existence. The feeling which this near approach to God inspires, is that perfect happiness which I sought for, in pleasure, in power, in riches, in earthly affections, in meditation, and in knowledge. But there was bitterness in my pleasure,—power, and wealth became familiar to me; in my earthly affections I was deceived; my knowledge was pain and doubt. I have found, in my old age, an happiness which fills my heart, and satisfies my reason; I see, now, why all the pleasures of the earth have palled upon me, and the lawful object for which my desires were reserved. Every remembrance of my decaying body brings me nearer to God; every earthly wish is extinguished; every injury forgiven; every passion sleeps: as the outward man perishes, the inward man lives in Christ, and is renewed day by day.

SERMON XLIII.

ON THE EFFECTS WHICH THE TUMULTUOUS LIFE, PAST IN GREAT CITIES, PRODUCES UPON THE MORAL AND RELIGIOUS CHARACTER.

And Jesus went out, and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed.—
MARK I. VERSE 35.

THERE are many passages in the New Testament, which evince the love of solitude to have been a feeling very frequent in the mind of our Saviour; his business was with the world, but it pleased him to retire from it; and upon the shore of the sea, upon the mountain, in the wilderness, surrounded by the works of God, to restore, and sanctify his nature with prayer. What Jesus did, we ought to do also; to retire for the purposes of religion; often to quit the world, that we may acquaint ourselves with God, and learn what the state of that soul is, upon which everlasting joy and sorrow depend.

As it falls to my lot to address those whose lives are past in this greatest of cities, the most stupendous collection of civilized men that the earth has ever contained, or the mind contemplated, under such circumstances, I have thought it right to expatiate upon the duty of occasional solitude, and to state those effects, which the habits of great cities must necessarily produce upon the moral and religious character. It is right to show men, that this never-ending, uninterrupted commerce with the world, darkens the evangelical light; erases the name of God; stifles the breath of prayer; closes the hand of charity; degrades the aspiring look of man, and fixes it upon the earth.

Nothing can be farther from my intention, than to praise,

or recommend a life of solitude, which is, perhaps, rather more injurious than a life of uninterrupted society. I speak only of occasional retirement, and contend only against incessant commerce with the world; that those who can escape from a life of tumult may do it, and those who cannot, by knowing, and fearing them, may guard against its ill effects.

It happens in great cities that men are too busy to be religious; whatever regulates the fate of empires, promotes the public happiness, or enlarges the boundaries of knowledge, originates in great cities; there it is best discussed, and most maturely perfected. Whatever is wonderful in nature, or curious in art, whatever human kind has of wit, or wisdom, of eloquence, beauty or genius, is crowded into great cities; all the marvels, scattered elsewhere sparingly over the face of the earth, are there collected into a single point; every fascination is spread out for the senses; not to sin is difficult; not to trifle impossible; these, then, are the reasons why the solitary place of prayer is valuable; why it is necessary to breathe, to pause, to be silent; to remember that there is a day of judgment, and an hour of death.

It is not favourable to religious feeling to hear only of the actions and interference of men, and to behold nothing but what human ingenuity has completed. There is an image of God's greatness, impressed upon the outward face of nature, which makes us all pious, and breathes into our hearts a purifying and wholesome fear. Perhaps God so constructed the outward world, as to remind man of his existence and of his power; it is not in vain that the hills are high, the streams rapid, and the forests deep; they touch the sensual heart of man, and rouse his torpid understanding to discover who made these wonders and who rules them. The very rocks are his scripture; and the mountains teaching him, appal him with the power of God. These things have neither speech nor language, but their voices are heard among men. Their sound is gone out unto all lands, and their words unto the ends of the world.

Nor is the spectacle of active nature less favourable to the cultivation of religious feeling than the contemplation of its passive scenes; every bird and every animal has its habits of life independent of man; it has a sagacity which man never taught; and propensities which man could not inspire. The growth of all the plants, and fruits of the earth, depend upon laws, over which man has no control; out of great cities,

there is everywhere around and about us, a vast system going on utterly independent of human wisdom and human interference; and man learns there the great lesson of his imbecility and dependence; not by that reflection, to which superior minds alone can attain, but by those daily impressions upon his senses, which make the lesson more universal and more certain. But here everything is man and man alone; kings and senates command us; we talk of their decrees and look up to their pleasure; they seem to move and govern all, and to be the providence of cities; in this seat of government, placed under the shadow of those who make the laws, we do not render unto Cæsar the things which are Cæsar's, and unto God the things which are God's, but God is forgotten and Cæsar is supreme; all is human policy, human foresight, human power; nothing reminds us of invisible dominion, and concealed Omnipotence; we do nothing but what man bids; we see nothing but what man creates; we mingle with nothing but what man commands; it is all earth and no heaven.

The weakness and helplessness of man, is one cause of his dependence upon a being greater and wiser than himself. It is not, I am afraid, in the season of youth and health, and in the possession of affluence, that we are most mindful of our religious duties; the lesson which all ought to learn from principle, is often taught by poverty, sickness, and old age, and we are then most willing to rest upon a superior power; when we learn from experience the moral and physical evils by which we are surrounded, and the confined powers of our nature by which those evils are to be repelled. This lesson, however, is more slowly learnt in great cities, than elsewhere, because there the strongest combination is formed against the accidents of life. It is there that every evil, which can harass humanity, is guarded against by the most consummate experience, and rectified with the most perfect skill; whatever man has discovered to better his condition, is there to be found; and the whole force of human genius called to the aid of each individual, gradually diminishes that conviction of human imbecility which is one cause of religious feeling.

Where the society in which we move, is not of a magnitude that is enormous, a very wholesome restraint is produced by public opinion; every action of each individual is known; and the fear of disgrace and reprehension comes in aid of the dictates of religion. But in the midst of such multitudes as these, life would not suffice for such minuteness of inquisi-

tion; every man walks in darkness; and his actions are as invisible to his fellow-creatures as if his days were past in the bosom of the desert. There is little question here of good and evil, of virtue and vice; whatever amuses is virtue, whatever tires is vice; in a moderate state of society, where full light is thrown upon every man's life, the good father, the just neighbour, the steady and affectionate friend, take the rank in public estimation, to which their excellent qualities entitle them; prudence, veracity, charity; a class of virtues are required and honoured, which, though unimportant to a superficial intercourse, are indispensable to long and intimate communication; so that many virtues are thus learnt from a regard to character, which are afterwards preserved from the love of God; enlightened by his holy Gospel, and confirmed by his grace; but so light and superficial are the relations among human creatures in great cities, so easily are the connections of society created and dissolved; and so numerous are those connections themselves, that you ask only for something that pleases for the moment; for birth, for wealth, for manner, for gayety, for the qualities and virtues of an hour; compatible, and often coexisting with every sin, abhorrent from the law of God and injurious to the happiness of man. Therefore, here are reasons why we should go into solitary places, and pray; because in the tumult of life, the man who can please for the passing hour, is better and greater than him who has difficult and unsplendid virtues; because goodness is not known, is not asked for, is not wanted: because a man can do as well without righteousness as he can with it; because he who forgets the Creator, and injures the creature, is as much loved and honoured as the just. Let any man ask the question of his own mind, if he has enjoyed the opportunity of comparing a life of moderate solitude with the distractions of a great city, where has he forgotten Christ, and benefactor, and kindred, and friend? where is it that he has found his benevolent feelings swallowed up in selfish vanity? where has he lived hating and blaming himself? The cure of all these things is the prayer and the solitary place; that calmness and stillness of spirits, in which no uncharitableness can live, and in which the soul of man is carried onward to futurity, and upwards to God. As the body, harassed with the noxious air of cities, seeks relief in the freedom and purity of the fields, the mind, wearied by commerce with men, resumes its vigour in solitude, and repairs its dignity.

We must not suppose that righteousness depends upon our exertions alone, and not upon the situations in which we are placed; the love of Christ is so strong in some men's hearts, that neither heights, nor depths, nor principalities, nor powers can avail to destroy it. But the greater part of us are what the circumstances in which we are placed incline to make us; in solitude, thinking sometimes of what man is, and of the God that made him; in the world, acting and thinking as the world do act and think, neglecting no pleasure, avoiding no display, avoiding only our own souls, and deaf to those warnings, which are the whispers of Heaven and the calls to salvation.

It is indeed possible that an human being may pass a long life in the midst of society, without getting one distinct view of his religious character, and may wait till the pains of death make him look back and tremble; his sorrows have all been dissipated; his compunctions smothered; his old age forgotten; his object has been to blunt all those feelings which lead to salvation; to heal instantly every warning pain, which might make him change; to avail himself of all the diversions before him; to forget unpleasant duties; and then, after threescore and ten years of voluptuous oblivion, he wakes to the judgments of God.

In saying these things I am well aware that the necessities of human life do not allow to us all to place ourselves in situations where the object of a rational and moderate intercourse with our fellow-creatures may be best promoted. Some are compelled by the accidents of the world, to mingle more with their fellow-creatures, some less; but it is the indispensable duty of all who cannot avoid scenes of tumult and perpetual occupation, to remember that tendency which such scenes have to harden the heart, and to make man forget his Redeemer and his God; it is their duty ever to call to mind, that all these works of men with which they are conversant, are but in fact, the works of him who made man; and in the midst of all the business, the pleasure, and the wonder which surround them, they must not forget the hour of death, the day of judgment, and the being which punishes and rewards; and let them, as often as can be, depart into the solitary place and pray that they remain unspotted from the world; that they be ever mindful of the insignificance of those scenes in which they are engaged; labouring in their worldly vocation with hearts firmly fixed upon the salvation of Christ.

SERMON XLIV.

ON THE CHARACTER AND GENIUS OF THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION.

Our consolation aboundeth by Christ.—2d Epistle to the Corinthians i. verse 5.

As we are now celebrating the Nativity of our blessed Saviour, and giving loose to those feelings of joy which arise from such a stupendous instance of God's mercy, we can surely do nothing better than to take some measure and account of what that advantage is we have received; and to examine upon what grounds of reason our gratitude is indulged.

In laying before you for this purpose, a short analysis of the genius and nature of Christianity, I shall begin with its negative excellencies, because these are what would first strike the mind of any reflecting man who had remarked the glaring absurdities and deficiencies of those religions which rival Christianity only in the number of their proselytes.

First, the genius of the Gospel is to discourage the pomps and ceremonies of worship, in which all spurious and barbarous religions are apt to indulge; it attaches no importance to outward trifles; the forms which it exacts are few, and instituted for the only purpose for which forms ought ever to be instituted, to awaken the attention to realities.

It is, perhaps, to the simplicity of the Christian faith, more than to any other cause, that Europe is indebted for its superiority over the rest of the world, for its industry, its science, and its comparative freedom. In the Christian world, every year increases the boundaries of human knowledge, and multiplies the instruments of human happiness. Man seems to be making that progress which his Creator intended he should make. In the Pagan world this year is the same as the last, the same as centuries before it; a childish, and com-

plex faith; interferes with every trifling arrangement of life; and so destroys all freedom of choice, and besets existence with so many frivolous rules, that the originality of man is totally destroyed; and every branch that he would push forth into the air with natural strength and beauty, is bent into the forms of art. I only mean to offer these last observations as a negative proof of the genuineness of Christianity, inasmuch as it shows the absence of a defect, for which all other widely-extended religions are remarkable, and certainly, in the minds of grave men, ought to excite veneration for the Gospel.

The Gospel is not a religion of fables and mythology, calculated for the infantine simplicity of savages. It holds forth no bribe to the senses: and not only does not ask their aid, but limits their gratifications within the narrowest limits of virtue. It is as far removed from austerity as from sensuality, for one of these two is commonly a feature in all spurious religions; either God is represented as bribing his votaries by bodily pleasures, or his votaries are enjoined to appease him by bodily pains; the Creator is cruel, or the creature voluptuous; these two features carry with them such strong marks of vulgar imposture, that a man of discretion may at once condemn as spurious every religion in which they are observable; the Christian faith throws a veil over these scenes and puts an end for ever to vain curiosity, by telling us that the eye has never seen such things as we shall hereafter see, that the ear has not heard them, nor has the heart thought them.

The Gospel has no enthusiasm; it pursues always the same calm tenour of language, and the same practical views in what it enjoins; nor does it ever in any way connect itself with questions of civil and ecclesiastical policy. These errors do not exist in the Gospel, and they do exist in all other religions but the Gospel; there is no other faith which is not degraded by its ceremonies, its fables, its sensuality, or its violence; the Gospel only is rational, simple, correct, and mild.

The Gospel contains a set of rules every one of which appears eminently calculated to promote our happiness; among the foremost of these rules is poorness of spirit, by which is meant a mind habitually void of offence, a favourable construction of men's motives, a connivance at little injuries and insults; moderation in resenting, and readiness in forgiving those of a more serious nature; a retiring, modest, and gentle disposition. Now it is plain, if such were the prevailing spirit among men, that the earth would be a far different scene from what it now is; to see what the magni-

tude of that good is which Christianity aims at conferring by this rule, it is necessary to remark the effects this rule produces where it is obeyed, the happiness which a gentle, and amiable man diffuses around him, the air of benevolence and content visible in those who live within his influence, and who seem to be breathing a purer atmosphere, and living in some land of Goshen, unsmitten by the hail, and unvexed by the storm. The opposite character which the Scriptures labour to correct, is the heroic character, the inordinate love of glory and power; and no man can for a moment doubt which of these two characters he would wish to see prevail, which carries misery in its train, which joy, which desolates the earth, and which gladdens it.

Another great feature of the morality of the Gospel is that sublime jurisdiction which it exercises over the thoughts, beginning with the rudiments of all action, and making the life correct by rendering the heart pure; a rule so far removed from severity, that it diminishes the difficulty of virtue; for of a certainty it is a much lighter command to say to men, your thoughts and your actions shall be one, you shall intend good and do good, than to say, you shall indulge in every licentious imagination, and abstain from every evil act; you shall prepare yourself for the commission of every sin, in order to practice every virtue.

The Gospel makes one great community of us all, and while it cherishes the more confined affections of family love, does not forget to inculcate an affection for the whole species, as a great and indispensable duty; while it makes good husbands, good fathers, and good sons, it kindles in the bosoms of the faithful that warm philanthropy which watches for, and employs every occasion to promote, the happiness of the whole human race.

The Gospel detaches us from the world, that is, it does not allow the affections to take a deeper root in the world than is necessary for that period which limits their existence; it prevents men from hoping and fearing in a life of seventy years, as they would hope and fear in a life of many thousand; its prohibitions do not abolish those feelings which stimulate human industry, but proportion the vehemence of the appetite to the real value of the thing desired; they moderate the pains of disappointment and the zeal of contention, by reminding us that this is but a small part of existence, and that it is foolish to attach as much importance to it as if it were the whole.

The Gospel exacts forgiveness of injuries, and grants for-

giveness of sins upon these terms; it allows no rest or residence to the malevolent passions, but requires a mind without the spot or blemish of hatred; it loves repentance, the sighing of a contrite heart, and the desire of such as be sorrowful; and requires, in all the dangers and distresses of the world, an undoubting confidence in God.

What is of equal value with such precepts, these books contain the life of Christ, of a being who, amid the verbal disputes and idle ceremonies of an illiberal people, taught his countrymen that the only useful knowledge was the knowledge of God's will, and the only true religion to do it; who lived a life so blameless that the very murderers who slew him for destroying their superstition, dared not breathe against his unpolluted name the murmur of a crime; who at every season, without intermission, when he dared, in the midst of cities, when he was compelled in the midst of deserts, poured forth his immortal precepts of goodness and wisdom, that he might make the earth gentle, and fill it with the spirit of charity. Such is the Gospel, such the benefits for which, in the ensuing nativity of our Saviour, we are about to return thanks to Almighty God; it is a religion without pomp, and which does not meddle with every little frivolous arrangement of our daily business. It is neither austere, nor fabulous, nor sensual, nor enthusiastic, nor political, nor warlike; there is one first principle pervades every syllable of its moral regulations, and that is the principle of promoting human happiness; for why are we to forgive, but that the tendency of human passions is in the contrary direction? why are we to hang loosely upon the world, and not to cling to it, but because we should be the most wretched of created beings, if we loved that, with the vehemence of eternal passion, which we are not sure to enjoy for a single hour? why are we to subdue high-mindedness, and to become poor in spirit, but because loftiness of spirit has so often bathed the world in blood, and shaken the foundations of human happiness? in short, there is not in the Gospel a single precept, which has not a direct tendency to make the world all that we find it to be in some of its parts, and to refine every human being into that gentleness of character, which delights us so much, in those best of human beings, who have spent their lives in the exertions of kindness, and in the subjugation of passion; add to this, the importance of the motives by which it operates, and the perfect example which it contains, and you have a summary of the Gospel.

To conclude, if any man should think fit to inquire what the Gospel has done for us, and in what way the condition of man is meliorated by it? the answer is, that no man with an ordinary share of candour, and with ordinary talents for observation, can doubt of the extensive and beneficial effects of the Gospel; not a day passes, but the violence of resentment is mitigated by it; it extinguishes a thousand hatreds; reconciles long-separated friends, and not only reconciles, but by teaching a spirit of charity, prevents those animosities which render reconciliation necessary. Christianity has infused such an amiable temper into this country, that nothing is so shamed or discountenanced as a resentment excessive in its effects, or implacable in its duration. Will any one say, that many minds are not daily fortified against temptation by the Gospel? that the train of inward thoughts is not purified by it? that many unhappy persons are not daily supported by the Gospel in pain, in obscurity, in poverty, in old age, in loss of kindred, in the hour of death? will any man say that the hungry are not fed by the Gospel? that the sick are not healed by it? in short, there is no question which may not be litigiously, or captiously put; but I confess I should be beyond measure surprised to find, that any man of real candour and intelligence, could for a moment doubt of the temporal effects of Christianity; that he could suffer himself really to ask, whether the most benevolent precepts, enforced by the highest motives, and believed by the greatest part of the world, to be revealed by God, can produce any beneficial effects upon the tempers and dispositions of men; that Christianity has elevated our nature to that immaculate perfection which it describes, is of course not true, nor approaching to the truth; for the heart of man, as the Psalmist says, is desperately wicked; but if there was removed from that heart, all that the Gospel has planted in it; if all the charity, the candour, the gentleness, the faith, and the holy hope were driven from the world, which the Gospel has brought into it, I am sure I know not who would choose to remain behind; we should then see what man is by himself, and what man is taught by his Maker; and when every bad passion was let loose, and the earth was one scene of horror and crime, we should then know what Revelation hath done for human happiness, and feel that our consolation aboundeth only through Christ.

SERMON XLV.

FOR THE SCOTCH LYING-IN HOSPITAL.

I have heard a voice as of a woman in travail, and the anguish as of her that bringeth forth her child.—JEREMIAH IV. VERSE 31.

To listen to that voice which the prophet in imagination heard, to diminish a real anguish, which he only witnessed with the eye of fancy; to minister to the weariness of heart, to the wailing and spreading of hands, and to lift from the ground many a living being that crieth out, woe is me, my soul is weary; to do what Jesus Christ did, to act as he commanded, and to labour in the work of salvation and love, for these objects we are met here this night;* for a moment the business of the world is forgotten; the aged are thoughtless of their infirmities; the gay of their pleasures; the busy of their toils; the church has told you, that there is great affliction in the land, and ye have entered into this holy place to minister unto it. May God bless this purpose, may he breathe into you the soul of sanctity, and for the mercies of the present hour, forget the sins that are past, and lessen the sorrows that are to come.

The sun is now fallen in the heavens, and the habitations of men are shaded in gross darkness. That sun is hastening onwards to other climates, to carry to all tongues, and people, and nations the splendour of day. What scenes of mad ambition and of bleeding war will it witness in its course. What cruel stripes; what iron bondage of the human race; what debasing superstition; what foul passions; what thick and dismal ignorance! It will beam upon the savage and sensual Moor; it will lighten the robber of Arabia to his

* This Sermon was preached in the night, as is the custom with Charity Sermons in Scotland.

prey; it will glitter on the chains of the poor negro. It will waken the Indian of the ocean to eat the heart of his captive. The bigot Turk will hail it from the summit of his mosque; it will guide the Brahmin to his wooden gods; but in all its course it will witness perhaps no other spectacle of a free, rational people, gathered together under the influence of Revelation, to lighten the load of human misery, and to give of their possessions to the afflicted, and the poor.

There is so much evil mixed with all human attempts at improvement, and we are driven so frequently to sacrifice one good to obtain a greater, that hardly any scheme has been proposed for promoting human comfort, which has not experienced, in its infancy, a strenuous opposition; as often as such opposition, proceeding from a mistaken calculation of good and evil, is conducted with temper and moderation, it deserves gentle treatment, and though it should be refuted, it should also be respected. The best answer that can be given to the very well-disposed people, who view with jealousy the institution of a Lying-in hospital, is their general establishment throughout the whole of Europe. On the continent, as I have just now stated, there is hardly a great city without them, and in London they are twelve in number; in one of these only, I perceive by the printed accounts of the year 1789, that twenty thousand women have been received since its first institution; I observe, also, there is hardly a dignitary of the English Church, who has not preached in their favour, and the crowd of respectable names of either sex, who have contributed to their support, is admirable and immense. Much as I love and respect that jealousy of religious men in this country which watches over the purity of morals with parental caution, I would remind them, that the love of virtue is not confined to this, or to any other country; that there are men in the metropolis of this island, as unimpeached in their moral and religious character, as jealous of public corruption, and as able to foresee consequences, who after an experience of half a century, continue to uphold these charities with the most Christian zeal, and to sacrifice to their welfare a very large portion of their time and attention. The reasonings which influence the opponents to this hospital, might have been more efficacious, if such an institution were new; but you are not requested to try an experiment, or to set an example of Christian charity; you have the incitement of other men's actions, and the benefit of their courage; the

danger which you suspect has been proved not to exist, and the blessings they have scattered you may diffuse; theirs was the vigour which strikes out original plans; yours the benevolence which pursues them when crowned with success; the path to them was perilous, to you it is safe; all rational opposition has been for ever silenced, by the irresistible reasoning of facts; to the reasoning of ignorance and passion, we can only oppose the feeling of silent compassion.

The branch of political economy with which Christianity is the most concerned, is the provision for the support and comfort of the poor,—for the first systematic work on political economy all Europe is indebted to this country, indeed I believe to this city. Let it not be said that those were the last to practice, who were the first to teach; that magnificent views and mistaken objections can originate in the same seat of learning; that you are enlightened in everything but your practice; and that you exemplify the errors which you refute.

If old age, if the orphan state, if madness, have all their separate establishments, abounding in comforts, regulated with care, and endowed even to opulence, why are poor unhappy women to be abandoned at a season when they are just objects of the tenderest compassion? If we diffuse the blessings of education from public funds; if we minister to the sharp anguish of wounds and fractures; if we fan the feverish blood; if we refresh the languishing body with wine; why are we to desert the gentle mother when she craves a morsel of food which she cannot then gain for herself? Why is charity cold, why is science mute for her alone? Why nurse we the tree and leave the seed to perish? Why multiply the comforts of man in his maturity, and provide for his necessities, while we leave his infant body to the winds, and engrave upon his printless heart, in the first morning of life, the feelings of pain?

Independent of all charitable notions, as an appendage and a very important one to a school of medicine, this charity deserves your notice and protection,—the Scotch are said to love their country with the warmest affection; I have lived long enough among them to see that that love is well bestowed. In some it is a blind impulse, but those who know the reasons on which their predilection rests, will be proud to see the principles of the healing art diffusing themselves from

their native land over the four quarters of the globe,—to reflect that even in the heart of India, or in the wilds of America, the science imbibed in this place, may soothe pain, strengthen weakness, and drive out the raging pestilence that stalketh among the habitations of men. It is of the utmost consequence that the reputation of your noble and incomparable school of medicine should be consulted by the encouragement of this hospital. If there be present in this church any of the chief men of this country; respectable from their rank, their years, their offices, and their talents; by whose advice the powers which govern would be influenced, and by whose authority the people are willingly swayed;—I ask them, if they can see without serious regret, such a rational charity as this abandoned from want of support? if they could hear without a pang, that this consecrated ground was sold? if they could see unmoved, other edifices erected on that spot where the wife of the poor man found shelter for her sick body, and her helpless child? If there are any circumstances which induce a man to look out of the circle of his own family and friends to the wider interests of humanity; if in that best school of all the virtues, you have learned to forget yourselves, to joy and suffer in the souls of others; if you are happy enough to know that warm social affections, guided by reason to their object, constitute the noblest work of Heaven; come forth and save this charity from destruction: statues and speaking inscriptions, the broken accents of children, the bursting hearts of mothers, the smiles of angels, the Son of God shall bless you.

I know very well that there are many men who imagine, that this department of medicine is unworthy the name of science; and, that while all other branches have been rescued from the hands of uneducated people, where they were all originally placed, this should still be retarded by ignorance, and disgraced by hypothesis.—The dignity of science is compounded of its difficulty and its utility; if mothers are daily snatched away, at this perilous season; if parents who hoped to smile on the cradle of their child, are destined to weep on his tomb; why is not the will of nature to be discovered, recorded, and taught here as in all her other operations? why is she gazed at with such trembling attention in her mournful hours, when she is hastening to decay? and why avert from her the patient eye of science, when she gives a joyful increase, and lends to the earth a living, thinking soul?

This is mere folly, arrogance, or unprincipled ridicule; it is that kind of greatness which is founded upon contempt; that which consists not in doing difficult or praiseworthy things, but in denying that other people do them, and which supposes that all the credit refused to the rest of the world will necessarily be reflected upon itself.

Having thus done what in me lies to convince your reason that this charity is worthy of your approbation, let me inquire of your feelings, if the objects whom it relieves are worthy of your compassion.

First, let me remind you that the objects of this charity, are women:—Providence has denied to them the rough courage which struggles with misfortunes; it has made them the comforters of man, and left them to his grateful protection. If we cannot all be saved from hunger and thirst, let them take the last morsel of bread, and the single cruise of oil, and be clothed with the remaining fleece; if charity is cold for every other suffering, it must not abandon them in whom the fountains of Christian goodness are never dry; remember how they sit whole nights in the sick man's chamber, how they know the language of his moaning, and give him what his looks can only ask; see how the timid child clings to his mother, how all wretched people flock to women as the temples of mercy. Whatever else be their faults, cruelty is not one; there never was a wretch so loathsome, so poor, and so sad, who has not found in woman a pity which the multitude of his griefs could never weary. When the disciples of Jesus went away to their own homes, it was Mary who sat down at the sepulchre and wept.

If this compassion is due to women at all other seasons, what shall we say of it in the season of child-birth? a season so perilous, that our church has bade every woman who has passed through it, return thanks to Almighty God for her safety. If you have ever entered the house of a poor man, and seen how few of the comforts of life it contains, you must feel some compassion for a mother abandoned to her agonies in the midst of wretchedness and noise; surrounded by other children, without money to purchase food, or the comfortable voice of a friend that she loves to hear. You, who have been the mother of children, who have enjoyed at this season quiet friendship, and the anxious tenderness of family love; you should have some mercy on mothers poorer than yourselves:—If you know their sorrows, minister to their poverty,—if

you remember what you felt for your children, remember also that the voice of nature speaketh as loud in the hearts of the poor.

If the image of a parent forsaken at this time of her distress, has aught in it which appeals to our compassion, how awful the spectacle of a mother driven by hunger and despair to the destruction of her child. To see a gentle creature hurled from the bosom to which it turns—grasped by the hands that should have toiled for it,—mangled by her who should have washed it with her tears, and warmed it with her breath and fed it with her milk! You may enjoy a spectacle far different from this; you may see the tranquil mother on the bed of charity, and the peaceful child slumbering in her arms; you may see her watching the trembling of every limb, and listening to the tide of the breath, and gazing through the dimness of tears on the body of her child. The man who robs and murders for his bread, would give charity to this woman; good Christians have mercy upon her, and death shall not snatch away your children: they shall live and prosper; mankind will love them! God will defend them!

There is a circumstance remarked before the season of child-birth, not unworthy of observation in this place; I mean the inexpressible anxiety of the mother to provide for her expected child every possible comfort it can want; to prepare its clothes, and to convince herself by perpetual interference and examination, that everything is ready for its reception. To some the mention of this may appear trifling and ridiculous; I say it is the bird building her nest, and the ewe seeking the sheltered pasture; it is the eternal God, speaking as he speaks to the native savage, and the creatures of the forest; it is that language which is more moving than the tombs of heroes, or the ruins of a great city; it is that gospel which has gone forth to all lands; it is that piercing original appeal of unprotected weakness, which mankind has heard in every age, which moistens every human face with tears, and melts every soul of flesh.

If the people of this island enjoy any moral advantages over the rest of Europe, it is, perhaps, in the domesticity of their character, in their attachment to family life, and the pleasure which they derive from the society of their children and wives; I am speaking to those who will understand me well, when I remind you of the feelings of a poor industrious

man, whose earnings exhausted in the purchase of food, disable him from making any provision at this season for the comforts of his wife. When you see him toiling from sun to sun, and still unable to rise from the necessities of the present hour, will you not save to such an useful, honest being, the anguish of returning to a sick house; the sight of agonies which he cannot relieve, and of wants to which he cannot administer? Give me a little out of your abundance and I will lift off this weight from his heart; listen to me when I kneel before you for humble, wretched creatures; help me with some Christian offering, and I will give meat to the tender mother, and a pillow for her head, and a garment for the little child, and she shall bless God in the fullness of her heart.

I fear I have detained you too long; but the sorrows of many human beings rest upon me, and many mothers are praying that I may bring back bread for their children. I told them that this ancient Christian people had never yet abandoned the wretched, that they had ever listened to any minister of Christ who spoke for the poor; I bade them be of good comfort, that God would raise them up friends; and when they showed me their children, I vowed for you all, that not one of them should perish for hunger, and for cold; do not send me back empty handed to these victims of sorrow; let not the woman and the suckling be driven from their comfortable home; listen to the voice of the woman in travail, and minister to the wailing and spreading of hands; if one social tie binds you to human life; if you can tell how the mother's heart is twined about her child; if you remember how women lighten the sorrows of life: if you are the disciple of the Saviour Jesus, to whom they kindly ministered, forsake them not this once, and God shall save you in the hour of death and the day of sharp distress.

SERMON XLVI.

ON THE PLEASURES OF RELIGION.

Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace.—PROVERBS III. VERSE 17.

IT has always been the practice with the ministers and teachers of religion, to speak in this manner of the feelings which religion inspires, not to confine themselves to the enumeration of religious duties, not merely to state the splendid reward of the dutiful in another scene of existence, but to contend that, here upon earth, pleasure and peace are the natural consequences of religion; that the righteous have not only the expectation of heaven, but the real enjoyment of earth; that, while their future hopes are more high than those whose principles are unrestrained, their present pleasures are, strictly and literally speaking, in number more frequent, higher in degree, and in nature more pure; they have given in their contrast, every imaginable advantage to the wicked man; birth, power, honour, genius and wealth; they have made their righteous man humble, poor, and unknown; they have said (and they have said most truly), that this last man is blessed rather than the first; that his mind is full of dearer and sweeter thoughts; that he is less racked, excited, and disturbed; that he has more affecting pleasures, more deep and solemn happiness; that he can so well answer for the wanderings and fancies of his mind, that he has walked so long and so firmly with God, that his ways are the ways of pleasantness, and his paths the paths of peace.

To enumerate the pleasures of righteousness is not possible, without analyzing and dividing every feeling which belongs to the system of human passions, because the effects of right-

eousness pervade them all: but I will endeavour to state and describe those which are the most conspicuous,—and the first of these shall be, that control which a righteous man exercises over his passions and desires.

A righteous man is a happy man, because he is a free man, and the servant to no inward lust; he can act up to his own decisions, and when he sees what is right, he can do it; he has found from experience that the impulse of passion may be withstood, till the resistance becomes habitually strong, and the passion habitually weak, and while the sinner stands trembling, and says to himself, shall I enjoy this one pleasure? shall I tempt the mercy of God only this once? the righteous man treads down Satan beneath his feet, defends his soul, and walks on to his salvation, unheeding bad pleasures that lure him from eternity. If there is wretchedness upon earth, it is to live by a rule which we perpetually violate; first, to convince ourselves that the thing is right, that prudence requires it, that the world approves it, that religion ordains it; then, when the eye is tempted, when the heart is touched only by the faint beginnings of pleasure, to forget prudence, to forget the world, to forget religion, to enjoy, and to repent; he who has suffered this long hates and despises himself; he can see nothing venerable in his own nature; nothing but that levity and voluptuousness which he would despise in others, and which, in spite of all self-love, he knows to be despicable in himself.

The most miserable of human beings are professed sinners, men who despise rule, who look upon their passions as mere instruments of pleasure, and are determined to extract from life every drop of amusement it can afford; the last excess is stale and tiresome; there must be a higher degree of emotion; when everything else is exhausted, the destruction of all decency affords some little entertainment; to laugh at religion is, for some time, new and amusing; but immodesty and blasphemy soon weary, like all other wretched resources; and though it may shame him to return, the sinner finds that (whoever else may have found it), he at least has not chosen the path of pleasantness and peace.

In fact, putting aside all religious considerations, there is not a greater mistake in the world than to suppose that a profligate man is a happy man; he seems to be happy, because his enjoyments are more visible and ostentatious; but is in truth a very sorry and shallow impostor, who may deceive

the young, but is laughed at by the wise, and by all who know in what true happiness consists; the truly happy man is he who has early discovered that he carries within his own bosom his worst enemies, that the contest must be manfully entered into; that if righteousness does not save him from his sinful appetites, they will rule him up to the moment of the grave; that they will bend him down to the earth, and tear and rend him like the bad spirits in Scripture; that his fame will be sullied, his mind and body wasted away, and his substance destroyed. When Solomon saw these things, when he beheld one woman groaning with despair, another writhing with disease, when he beheld the follies, the errors and crimes of the world, and could see nothing placid, nothing calm, nothing stable but the righteous man; then he said, (and oh, how truly and wisely he said it,) the ways of that man are the ways of pleasantness, and his paths the paths of peace.

A religious man is happy because he is secure; because it is not in the power of accident, or circumstance, to disclose any secret guilt; as he *is*, he has long *been;* he can refer to the blameless tenour of years; to a mind long exercised in avoiding offence towards God, and towards man! His present enjoyments are never polluted by bitter remembrances of the past; whatever he has of honour or consideration among men, he has honestly and safely; it does not depend upon their ignorance, nor upon his dexterity, nor upon any fortunate combination of events; the more men know him, the more they love him; the more they try him, the more plainly they are convinced that he follows after righteousness as the truest wisdom, and that this feeling is the plain and simple key to all his actions; herein it is that the sinner so grossly miscalculates his happiness, and that he is so bitterly taunted by the great masters of ethics in the Scriptures; that he has lost that in which the pleasantness and comfort of righteousness principally consists; the inviolable feeling of security by which it is accompanied; believe me, whether you have sold this for money, or parted with it for ambition, or bartered it for the joy of some vile appetite, you have lost the purest and noblest instrument of human happiness. The time will come when you will say to yourself, why did I do this? why did I give up my pleasant innocence? why cannot I look upon every man that I meet with the same firmness and cheerfulness with which I was wont? In this

short and passing life, there is nothing which can repay a man for the loss of his own conscious purity. In extreme old age, he will loathe the chariots and the horses, the purple, the fine linen, and the sumptuous fare the price of his soul, and will remember, (when it is too late,) that the ways of righteousness were pleasant, and her paths the paths of peace.

I should say that another great source of pleasure, from religion, is the feelings of charity and brotherly love which it always inspires. As gracious God has given to one object beautiful colours, and to another grateful odours, he has annexed exquisite feelings of happiness to the performance of every benevolent action; it is impossible to do good to others, without feeling happy from it; and the conviction, which religion inspires, that a man is not born for himself alone, and the habit which it inculcates, of attention to the interests and feelings of mankind, induce at last that state of calm and permanent satisfaction which the words of Solomon describe. For as nothing disturbs us more than to perceive the effects of that secret, yet general enmity, which is produced by high-mindedness, arrogance and selfishness, so nothing is more grateful than general love, produced by a long tenour of courtesy, of justice, of active kindness and of modest respect. It is not only the subsequent reflection which this benevolence, the attribute of righteousness, produces, but it makes happiness by giving new interest to life; other men cultivate the great, the rich and the celebrated; but the righteous man cultivates and studies all whom he approaches, not because they are rich, or great, or powerful, but because they are human beings, and it is his duty, as a Christian, to be gentle and gracious to all; to make him benevolent, it is not necessary that his avarice should be awakened, his vanity gratified, or his curiosity excited; he has no need of such powerful motives; but if he can make the mean greater in their own eyes,—if he can give confidence to the humble,—if he can instruct the ignorant,—if he can do good to any human being, that is enough for him; his recompense is that the sum of human happiness should be increased, and that he himself should be the humble instrument of good. Contrast these feelings with the contempt which worldly men assume; the unchecked hatred in which they think it lawful to indulge; their neglect and inattention to all whom they have not some poignant motive for honour-

ing; look to this striking contrast, see what different states of mind must result from this diversity of conduct and character, and then determine who understands happiness the best; who has taken the best views of human life; whose ways are the ways of pleasantness, and whose paths the paths of peace.

The greatest torment of this world is the uncertainty of living at all, and the uncertainty of retaining the good things of this world, if we do live; but here is a man, the man of religious wisdom, who has practically adapted his love of some objects to their own uncertain nature and hopes, if he loses others here, to meet with them in another scene of existence; if he experiences a reverse of fortune he feels it; but he feels it moderately; it is not his only hope, nor his best hope. I would rather my passage were pleasant (he says) but it is only a passage; I am hastening onward to that state of existence which I have been always taught from my first childhood to look up to as the end and object of this. I have no false philosophy; I allow, that what are commonly called the good things of this world, are properly the objects of a moderate desire and attention; but I have so trained and accustomed my mind to think of something better, I have drawn such fairer pictures and contemplated such nobler scenes, that no human misfortune can cast me down, and utterly deprive me of my pleasantness and my peace.

We see, sometimes, that a man rejoices with trembling; that he is afraid to give way to his human affections, that he shudders at the warmth of his own feelings for children, or for parents, because he does not know how soon he may mourn over the frailties of life; here (he says) I have never checked my heart; I have shipped all my happiness upon that which a breath of wind, or a little too much damp, or a little too much heat may for ever destroy; the righteous man, he also has his feelings; but though his tears fall down over the dead like the tears of other men; though he rends his garment, and clothes himself in sackcloth and in ashes, his spirit comes back to him, and his pleasantness returns, because he knows that the souls of the dead are in the hands of God, and that a better state of existence will restore to him all that he has lost in this; by connecting immortality with this short life, he lightens all its burthens, lessens all its misfortunes, and gilds all its pleasures; if his happiness fluc-

tuates here, he can look to that in which there is no varying, nor shadow of change; if the joys of this world fall short of his expectations, he knows that others await him greater than his imagination can conceive; if he is afflicted here by the appearances of successful injustice, and the sinner triumphing in the fruits of his wickedness, he cheers himself with the thought of final retribution; the righteous man carries about with him a charm which protects his mind from the effects of injury, vicissitude and doubt; and leaves him in that state of pleasantness and peace which wealth and power alone, and all the common instruments of happiness, can so seldom confer.

I have just now alluded to another source of tranquillity in the mind of the righteous man: I mean the comforts he derives from the future retributive justice of religion.

A man of proper feeling always suffers, from observing the striking disproportion that exists in this world between happiness and merit; the spectacle of a good man struggling with misfortune, or languishing in obscurity, excites strong compassion; but it is the severest trial of human patience, to witness the respect, honour and prosperity of bad men; there are no events which ruffle the tranquillity of the mind more, and which more encourage a general sensation of disgust at human life. These sad scenes are tolerable to the religious man alone, from that final order and regularity with which he knows they will hereafter be concluded; he pities successful vice, while others rage against, or envy it; he knows that the good forgotten, and the just persecuted, are precious in the sight of God, and that their sorrows are the pledges of salvation. Wherever he looks, justice in its most perfect shape terminates his view; all guilt is detected; all innocence is brought to light; at the conclusion of all things a never-failing judge gives to every thinking soul, the good and the evil which are its due.

These are the vexations which the religious man escapes, and these the sources of that tranquillity which so commonly falls to his share; his happiness does not obtrude itself; it is not noisy nor splendid; it does not consist in humbling the pride and exciting the envy of others; it is deep, placid and internal; a pleasantness and a peace proceeding from moderation of desire, just observation on human condition, and ardent hope of immortality. Superstition is not righteousness, fanaticism is not righteousness, nor are idle fears, or

vain fancies, or frivolous observances deserving of that name; but that liberal and enlightened righteousness which the Gospel teaches is happiness; the most unbounded voluptuary that the world ever produced has not a thousandth part of that enjoyment of life that he has whose passions are regulated, and whose hopes are immortal. After the first darkness of youthful ignorance is dispelled, it is the clearest and plainest of all truths that righteousness is the only source of peace; the only system upon which the difficulties and distresses of life can possibly be encountered and subdued.—No man is so profoundly ignorant of pleasure as a professed sinner; pleasure is gained by being the lord and master of our own hearts; by binding our passions in links of iron; by adapting worldly hopes and fears to the nature of worldly things; by obeying God, by trusting to his providence, by expecting his judgments; this is the discipline which banishes fear, excludes remorse, and renders despair impossible; it gives birth to hope, it cherishes joy, it nourishes great thoughts, it produces enchanting desires, it colours the earth over with the gay light of heaven, and makes the ways of every man the ways of pleasantness, and his paths the paths of peace.

SERMON XLVII.

UPON RELIGIOUS EDUCATION.

And ye fathers, bring up your children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.—EPHESIANS VI. VERSE 4, *in part*.

IN treating of the subject of religious education, as I propose to do this day, it is impossible not to begin with an opinion which neither leans to this nor that system, but objects totally to all religious education whatever. For instance, it is said, why give to children strong opinions upon subjects of the highest difficulty and the highest importance, and which they may possibly be induced to change when their understandings are mature? instruct them only in the first principles of natural religion, and leave them to a gradual acquisition of the sacred truths of Revelation, in proportion as the growth of their understandings enables them to estimate the value of that evidence upon which Christianity depends; by these means their belief will always be rational, and they will not entertain a faith for which they are not ready to render a reason. The objection to this system, which appears to be more distinguished for an absence of good sound sense than for any feature of ingenious paradox which it may exhibit; the objection to it is, that you cannot keep a mind void of all religious opinions which you do not bring up in a particular system of those opinions; such a state of suspense, even if it were desirable, cannot be obtained; some principles on such a subject the mind will imbibe, and your alternative is, not between those which you are ready to infuse and none at all; but it is between your own and those crude and perilous opinions which sin is ever ready to suggest, levity always prompt to encourage, and ignorance never able to detect and repel; at the very moment when you had intended to begin

this long-deferred education, to avail yourself of this now-matured reason, and to offer to his free election those truths which you thought it uncandid to impress upon a ductile and ignorant child; at that moment you would find the question prejudged: you would perceive the mind filled up by opinions as strong as those you had kept away, but not as good; you would meet with all the obstinacy you dreaded, with prepossessions equally formed before they could be fairly discussed; but without the qualification of their being formed in favour of truth. Besides, can it be a reason why a parent should not teach to his children those sacred truths which have taken such firm hold of his belief, because such truths may not hereafter present to the ripe understanding of his offspring an evidence as satisfactory as they have done to his own? What can any man do but communicate to the mind of another a belief as sincere as that which actuates his own? he does so fearlessly in all human science; why should he dread to do it where the instruction is more necessary, and the lesson more awful? It is not possible to wait for opinions till we are capable of judging whether opinions are right or wrong; we must act before we can reason; a great part of human life is elapsed, and all the habits which are to influence the future man are formed before it can be said that he is fairly capable of forming a judicious opinion upon any abstruse subject; in the meantime he must have decided notions of sin and righteousness; a divine law sanctioning those notions; a strenuous belief giving to that law its full influence upon his actions; and ancient forms cherishing that strenuous belief. If none of these things were taught till the causes from which they originate, the evidence on which they depend, and the consequences to which they lead, could be plainly apprehended, it is quite clear that they would soon cease to be taught at all. Ye fathers, says the apostle, without any regard to these things, bring up your children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord; give them your own religious opinions firmly and tenaciously; plant so deep that the seed will not easily be rooted up; instead of candidly waiting for mature reason, seize practically hold of all the softness and ductility of youth, use all the influence and authority of age to inculcate the principles of the Gospel: whatever changes in those principles may be made by the future commerce of life that may depend upon circumstances

over which we have no control, let us only unfold the book of God in the season of gentleness and obedience, and after this manner bring up our children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

It will not, I presume, be considered as indiscreet to remark, that some mischief is done in religious education by the over-zealous feelings of the teacher, who appears to believe, that a sentiment cannot be too frequently repeated, because it is good, or a cause be weakly defended because it is right. At a certain period of youth, and with a certain share of penetration in him who reads, it is not sufficient that those works which are written for religious instruction should be pious; they must be able, as well as pious; there must not only be zeal, but zeal according to knowledge; not merely abuse of infidelity, but conviction and refutation; sound argument from candid premises; fair admission, impartial statement, accurate knowledge, vigorous reasoning, conclusions modest in style, and irresistible in power. Christianity disdains to suppress any facts, or to impute bad motives instead of answering plausible objections; it must be proved by something stronger than exclamation, and defended by something less precarious than feeling; the selection of writers calculated to promote religious knowledge in the young, is therefore an object of much greater skill and delicacy than it is commonly conceived to be; because nothing can be more pernicious to the prosperity of a cause than the weakness and uncandid spirit of those who are its advocates; and amidst the great number who stand forward with laudable zeal, in the defence of religion, it must of course happen that there are some who have no other merit than the merit of intending well.

May we also add, that some mischief is done in religious education, by the very high tone taken up respecting religious subjects; the evidence for Revelation is sometimes rashly compared to geometrical evidence; everything is represented as so clear, and so perspicuous, that it is impossible any difficulty can be suggested; it is not contended that a solution is ready, but that a doubt cannot exist; the mischief of which overstatement is, that a young person, embarrassed by the first arguments of infidelity which chance has thrown or design placed in his way, considers that he has been deceived, that the truth has been kept from him, and becomes irreligious, partly to vindicate the dignity of his understanding, partly

from the sudden suspicion that the cause of infidelity is much stronger than it really is. Truth is ever safe and ever durable; it is better to admit at once, that in a question which depends upon the evidence of eighteen centuries, there are some difficulties, that all is not reduced to demonstration, or clear to be apprehended as objects of sense; it is sufficient, that by your own candour and industry, you may arrive at such a preponderance of evidence as will produce decided conviction, and leave you without a fair doubt of the Divine origin of the Scriptures; but do not imagine, if you are determined to investigate the question, that you have no doubts to dispel and no difficulties to solve; those doubts you will dispel, and those difficulties you will solve; your solemn opinions will at length rest, not upon the authority of other men's minds, but upon the full conviction of your own. Such is the language that I should deem it most useful to hold in religious education, and after this manner would I bring up a child to the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

A very important part of religious education is the virtues of toleration and forbearance; it is the duty of us all to educate our children in that modification of the Christian faith which we ourselves profess, and to inspire them with a strong predilection for that church of which we are members, by insisting on those circumstances upon which we conceive its superiority to be founded; but these feelings we must labour to unite with a respect for every other Christian worship; with a conviction of the indisputable right of every sect to worship God after their own notions of spirit, and of truth, and with a decided aversion to every species of hatred and persecution, grounded upon difference of religious opinion.

The spirit of intolerance, however, so contrary to the nurture and admonition of the Lord, so apt, but for incessant care, to mingle with, and pollute the true evangelical spirit, does not furnish, as many contend, any argument against religion; but shows only how difficult it is for men to endure contradiction upon topics which so deeply penetrate the understanding, and affect the heart; it shows the useful and pervading energy of a principle which a man does not receive as he receives the cold truths of human science, but pants to carry it into other men's hearts, and to light over the world the same burning zeal which glows within himself; that this spirit is capable of every dangerous excess;

that every effort of religious education should be used for its moderation, is unquestionably true; but it only shows that the thought of God, because it is greater than all other thoughts, stirs up stronger passions; that when men are thinking of eternity, you cannot keep them within the same limits as if they were reasoning of the interests of a day; but temper this great incitement with a commanding prudence, and you may draw from it every peaceful virtue in this world, and every heavenly blessing in the next.

There is a toleration which, instead of proceeding from the meekness and modesty of a Christian, is derived from a callous indifference to every description of faith; this, of course, is not a virtue, but an accidental good consequence from a vice; the difficulty to conquer, the merit to display, the evangelical feeling to possess, is to cherish no sentiment of aversion for him who warmly denies what you warmly affirm; who believes that form to be indifferent which you have always been taught to consider as essential; if you wish to such a person no punishment and no privation because such has been his religious discipline, and such yours; if at the moment you firmly believe yourself right, you are aware it is possible you may be wrong; if you are at once sincere and indulgent, zealous and forgiving, firm and modest, you have then, indeed, fought a good fight; the true spirit of the Gospel is within you, and good and great is that man who has thus brought you up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

It is a great difficulty in religious education, to inspire proper notions concerning the forms and ceremonies of religion: one danger is, that the practice of religion may come in time to be considered as inferior in importance to those very forms which were only instituted to promote and protect it; the opposite danger is that from the neglect of forms, the essential part of religion may be itself impaired; the age, however, in which we live is some guide to him who would steer safely through those opposite extremes, the genius of which is, I am afraid, rather to neglect those forms which are necessary than to cultivate those which are superfluous.

Fanaticism is one of those great perils which are cautiously to be guarded against, in bringing up children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord; they are to be taught that God is not served by extravagance; that it is possible to be fervent

without being foolish; that the least acceptable sacrifice to Heaven is the sacrifice of propriety and common sense; that though it be a true sign that you are drawing near to God when men persecute you for your righteousness, it is a sure sign that you have mistaken the way to him, when all men deride you for your absurdity. Arrogant ignorance, insisting upon persecution, and canvassing for contempt, will never reap the rewards of that modest righteousness which, shunning the notice of men, will still rather endure persecution than do wrong.

It is no inconsiderable part of religious discipline, to guard the mind from the influence of superstition, and to inspire just notions of the Deity, so that the soul may not be afraid where no fear is, nor those principles be converted to our punishment which were intended for our happiness. A superstitious man is afraid of joy and amusement, and trembles when he is not wretched, lest God should be angry; he perceives that the means of happiness are given, but he thinks they were placed here to tempt, not to bless; even perpetual sadness cannot make him safe; a thousand involuntary thoughts spring up, which he thinks the angels record for his future punishment; he is perpetually acting, and looking, and thinking sin, and there is always near him a cruel and envious God who made him frail, and marks his frailty for guilt. For him Nature has no ordinary course, and Providence no general law; every death is a judgment, and every sickness a visitation; nothing that concerns him is ever brought about by secondary means; he becomes healthy, and ill, rich and poor, by a special interposition of Providence; lives under a separate dispensation, and is the subject of more miracles then were employed for the establishment of the sacred truths of Christ. All these are false and superstitious notions of the Deity, for though we may believe that God does sometimes interfere, we cannot know when, and it is derogatory to the wisdom of those general rules by which the world is governed, to suppose that they so perpetually require correction and change: this is not the true nurture and admonition of the Lord.—It is our business rather to show the young that this world does not belong to the just and the good; that wickedness triumphs in it, and sin is prosperous; but that there is One on high who sees it all, and will not endure it for ever; to please whom you must possess a mind prone to

compassion, swift to forgive, and able to suffer long; which no aspiration for power or wealth can make base; which loves to be good and just better than it loves any one thing human; which employs life in mortifying sin, promoting righteousness and rendering itself better fitted for heaven; these are the true notions of the Almighty, which the Gospel teaches; and these are the feelings the apostle would inspire, when he commands a parent to rear up his children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

SERMON XLVIII.

ON THE USE AND ABUSE OF THE WORLD.

They that use this world as not abusing it.—1 Corinthians vii. verse 31.

If we attend to the general tenour of the language of our blessed Saviour and his disciples upon the subject of worldly pursuits, it is quite clear that their object was not to abolish, but to regulate them; not to persuade mankind that they should not use the world, but that they should so use it, as not to abuse it. The whole of life of course cannot be passed in the fervour of prayer, and the effusions of piety; the greatest part must be spent in action, and to act we must have desires sufficiently strong and systematic to become pursuits; it is not only lawful to engage in worldly pursuits, but absolutely necessary to do so; without them righteousness would be fantastical speculation or criminal indolence; the great points for consideration are, as we must pursue something, what is best worth the pursuit? what are those objects at which a wise and religious man may fairly aim? how may he use the world without abusing it? Imperfect as all its pleasures are, what are the best and greatest that world can afford? For I repeat again, that righteousness cannot consist in neglecting and despising everything in this world, but in selecting proper objects of our attention; and in rendering even those proper objects subordinate to the higher considerations of religion.

It has been ever a great question with the pious and the good, what degree of happiness the world can afford; the holy Scriptures call it the valley of tears; the dark shadow of death is said to be shed over it; all things have been denominated vanity and vexation of spirit, which are under the

sun; but these melancholy views of human life either respect the errors of life, and the common foolish objects of our ambition, or they are intended to contrast the brief, fluctuating, and half-satisfactory joys of the world, with a perfect and eternal felicity. It is still, therefore, true that there are some pursuits which will probably confer happiness upon him, who, at the same time, firmly connects this world with that which succeeds it; such happiness is not, to be sure, consummate and certain, but it is highly probable, and very important.

I will, therefore, expatiate upon the methods of using the world, without abusing it, and enumerate those objects which are truly worthy of a wise man's best exertions.

The first rule for using the world is, to live in it with a clear conscience, without the startings and trembling of guilt; in innocence, openness, and decent freedom; this is the basis of happiness, the rock on which the house is reared. Whatever be our external condition, if there is not a perfect clearness within from all great and atrocious sin, life is but a load of anguish, and the greatest man breathing, a wretch who would gain by exchanging his existence with the lowest of human beings.

This obvious point of a good conscience disposed of, the world is to be used, and not abused, with regard to wealth; and this is not so easy a point to adjust; it may, however, be stated (I think) with safety, that a wise and religious man may strive to obtain that middle station of opulence which places him above contempt, and below envy; which, while it shelters him from that unfortunate ridicule which is too often the lot of poverty, neither affords the opportunity, nor encourages the disposition to exercise a depraved superiority over his fellow-creatures; beyond this, riches are not an evil if they come, but they are not a good worth the toil of pursuit. The state of enjoyment which one degree of wealth affords over another, soon becomes habitual; what is sumptuous fare to one, is daily food to another; and your luxuries are the common enjoyments of some man greater than you. The proportion between an ordinary state and an unusual gratification is the same in all, though each class in life positively sets out from a different degree in the scale; from which of those degrees it is our lot to begin our career, is a circumstance perfectly immaterial to happiness; the abuse of the world is to eat forever the bread of carefulness; to come late to rest, to rise up early, to add vineyard to vineyard, and field

to field, till there is no one (as the Scriptures say), left upon the earth; to hoard up, and to gather into garners, as if we were to equal the rocks and hills in duration; and were to remain here, till the heavens themselves had waxed old, and were rolled up like a garment, and changed as a vesture is changed.

To use the world aright, there must be a vigorous employment of time, a great and absorbing occupation to prevent the temptation and dispel the melancholy of idleness. The effects of inactivity make the intentions of Almighty God clear as they regard the destiny of man; for to do nothing is so horrible, that we are often compelled to do harm to avoid it; and sin becomes the natural resource of indolence. The want of occupation gives birth too to that anticipation of evil, those dismal views into futurity, which occasion much more unhappiness than the evils themselves when they do occur. An occupied man has no leisure for counterfeit misfortune; an inward impulse hurries him on through little doubts, jealousies, suspicions, and distant fears, and keeps him ever cheerful, and ever serene; an evil which is not come, he thinks may not come; if its approach is certain, he does not magnify its degree; life receives in him all that assistance from sweetness of temperament, harmony of disposition, and wise arrangement of thought, which their ministry can possibly supply; and though there are of course many evils which do not depend upon our method of judging them, yet there are many others which may be magnified into serious misfortunes, or will subside into insignificant trifles according to the tenour of that disposition upon which they fall. All these advantages are gained by a full and active occupation of time; without which it is hardly possible to enjoy much of innocence, dignity, or happiness in this life, or to use the world without abusing it.

Another great ingredient for the increase of happiness and the proper use of life, is the cultivation of kindness and benevolence; nothing can be more worthy the exertions of a wise man than this discipline, or so likely to reconcile him to the world for the short period in which he remains in it; the lowest degree of it consists in avoiding all just cause for offence; no callous indifference to other men's feelings; no belief that strength or greatness of mind is evinced by contempt of the little niceties which inflict pleasure and pain; no superiority founded on that unchristian asperity which

any man can assume who is sufficiently devoid of delicacy and shame to do so; but a firm conviction and a perfect recollection that all men have as much right to be happy as ourselves; and an earnest desire to study and respect their feelings in the most minute parts of life, so that no man may know, on our account, one moment of pain which a deliberate sense of duty does not compel us to inflict: but these are narrow limits for the feelings of kindness; a wise man will not only please by not offending, but please by positive efforts to comply (so far as sincerity and innocence permit), with the leading notions and prevailing systems of those with whom he lives, so as to be a perpetual source of satisfaction to his little portion of the world, and to contribute his efforts to gladden and to embellish human intercourse. It is possible for any man in time to teach himself the strongest sympathy with the happiness of others, however distant and unknown; so that every blessing which it pleases Almighty God to vouchsafe to the children of men, the sick rescued from death; the poor defended from oppression; the good rewarded; an injured nation victorious over its powerful enemies; any history of joy, any page out of the annals of happiness, may bring with it its tribute of calm and placid satisfaction. These habits of benevolence necessarily procure not only general good will, but raise up by degrees the blessings of friendship, the shield and ornament of life; and if there is any worldly thing worth the notice of a religious mind, it is to be cared for by good and upright men; to feel that you have endeared yourself to those who have sagacity to discern what you really are, and to compare you with the rest of the world; to enjoy that noble proof, that your struggles for righteousness have not been fruitless, or your efforts to meliorate your fallen nature quite in vain; that you have some value, some attraction, some source of conciliation, some little portion of good; that you are not quite left alone and abandoned in the wilderness of life. This is one of the greatest goods the world affords, and I wish most forcibly to impress upon the younger part of my congregation, that the friendship of just, able, and pious men, is the highest prize they can obtain; the most signal blessing which God bestows; the soundest proof of having done well; the best security for doing well; the highest human barrier against all sordid impurities and base compliances; the greatest comfort and hope and embellishment of life.

The world may be said to be used without abuse, when a portion of life is dedicated to the acquisition of knowledge; to discover more of truth, and to become better acquainted with the propesties and relations of those objects by which we are surrounded, promotes the happiness of others, while it secures or increases our own; to see what this world is in which we are placed, to investigate the curious attributes of each object it contains, seems to be a life agreeable to that Providence which has placed us in the midst of wonders, and roused us by inward feelings to their contemplation. The love of knowledge may be fairly and religiously indulged from an experience of the beneficial effects which it produces upon human happiness, from remembering that the sick are healed by knowledge, the hungry fed by it; the blessings of nature generally diffused and equally divided by it; the appetites and passions of mankind, arranged in civil institutions by knowledge; and all the powers of matter, turned from the destruction of the human race, to their use and convenience. The most zealous Christian of us all, in cultivating human knowledge, will find the amplest occasions for carrying into effect all its provisions of benevolence; it will add power to his charity, and give to him those enlightened views and strengthened faculties which confer wisdom and skill in doing good; besides, too, though life is a moment compared with eternity, it brings with it many weary, weighing hours, which are best lightened by the varied and inexhaustible resources of knowledge; by its exuberance of images; by its fertility of thought, and the busy inward world which it makes within the breast; a man is not saved by knowledge, and if he is puffed up with it, it is laughter and lightness before God; but we must use the world in some way while we are in this place of sojourning; we must do the best that the temporary nature intrusted to us seems to indicate; and there is nothing better which we can do, than to love that which is always the guardian of innocence, the friend of true religion, and the handmaid of laborious virtue.

The last point which I shall state as conducive to happiness and as using the world aright, is a moderate and temperate enjoyment of the praises of our fellow-creatures; not that human praise is ever to be a motive for action; the love of Christ and sincere faith in his holy name, are the only lawful and religious motive for human actions; but when we have acted from these motives; when, in compliance with the pre-

cepts of the Gospel, we have dedicated a great part of existence to the good of mankind, then if praise does come, it is a pure joy of life; if all men say with one accord, we have ever beheld in you the beautiful signs of mercy and compassion; we have long seen you forgetful of yourself, labouring even for those who could never know the author of their happiness, giving up day after day, and year after year, to plans of benevolent wisdom and exalted goodness; if all this bursts in upon a human being, and moves the springs of his heart with joy, his Saviour does not call upon him to hear with coldness the overflowing gratitude of his own flesh and blood; his pleasure is lawful, and there is joy in heaven itself over the tenderness and the happiness of the world.

This, then, it is to *use* the world and not *abuse* it; at these solemn seasons of humiliation and review, it is our duty to direct aright the objects of human ambition, to reclaim mankind from the paths of sin and death, and to prevent them from losing that trifling portion of good which this world is able to supply; a conscience clear of crime, a moderate competence of wealth, the soul of charity and brotherly love; a thirst for knowledge; a fair distinction among men, earned by a life of zealous and enlightened benevolence; this is the frame and tenour of mind, in which, (if I could) I would live my short hour on the stage of life; and in this manner, would I least tremble to meet my Redeemer and my Judge. How is it that men do use the world? Too often for gain; too often for conquest; too often for inordinate vanity; for sensual pleasure; for palaces built by crimes; for trophies reared by cruelties; for bad joys gained by breaking mens' hearts, and by grinding them to the dust; in this way we seek for happiness, where no happiness is to be found, mistaking and forgetting the boon of God; for the Almighty has vouchsafed to us here, a little portion of joy to comfort us in this time of our pilgrimage, and to charm our pained steps over the soil of life; yet that pleasure is quiet, modest, unassuming, evangelical, coming from a good heart, tender to all men, humbled before God, using the world, not abusing it, waiting day and night, in all faith, and all humility, and resignation, for the coming of Christ.

SERMON XLIX.

ON THE RESURRECTION.

If Christ be not risen then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain.
FIRST BOOK OF CORINTHIANS XV. VERSE 14.

* THE history of the resurrection of Christ is one of the most valuable parts of the Christian evidence; not that, as a miracle, the resurrection is to be accounted a more decisive proof of supernatural agency than any other miracle; not that, as it stands, it is better attested than many others; but that it is completely certain, that the apostles of Christ and the first teachers of Christianity asserted the fact; and this would have been equally certain if the four Gospels had been lost or never written; every piece of Scripture recognizes the resurrection; every epistle of every apostle; every author cotemporary with the apostles; of the age immediately succeeding the apostles; every writing, from that age to the present, genuine or spurious, on the side of Christianity, or against it, concur in representing the resurrection of Christ as an article of his history received without doubt by all who called themselves Christians, alleged from the beginning by the propagators of the institution, and alleged as the centre of their testimony. Nothing which a man does not himself hear or see can be more certain than that the apostles and first teachers of Christianity gave out that Jesus had risen from the dead; in the other parts of the Gospel narrative, a question may be made by infidels whether the things related of Christ be the *very* things which the apostles and first teachers of the religion delivered concerning him? And this question depends a good deal upon the evidence we possess of the genuineness, the

* The greater part of the arguments in this sermon, and in the sermon on the Nature of Christianity, are taken from Paley's Evidence.

antiquity, the credit, and the reception of the books; upon the subject of the resurrection, no such discussion is necessary, because no such doubt is entertained; whatever else is certain of the resurrection, it is *quite* certain, that it was outwardly asserted to be true by the disciples of Christ; and the only points which can enter into our consideration are, whether the apostles knowingly published a falsehood, or whether they were themselves deceived. If either of these suppositions is possible, or highly probable, the resurrection of our Saviour cannot be considered as that strong evidence of the truth of Christianity which the ministers of the Gospel have always represented it to be.

The supposition of fraud (after a considerable trial of its efficacy), is, I believe, pretty generally given up by the enemies of the Gospel; the nature of the undertaking, and of the men; the vast improbability that *such* men should engage in such a measure, as a scheme; their personal toils, dangers, and sufferings in the cause; their appropriation of their whole time to the object; the warm, and seemingly unaffected zeal with which they profess their sincerity, exempt their memory from the suspicion of imposture; their conduct, as preachers of the Gospel, was disinterested, noble and generous; they quitted house, land, occupation, friend, kindred, parent, wives, children, country—every pursuit, and every endearment of life, to propagate, with infinite labour, through innumerable difficulties and dangers, the salvation of mankind, certain of meeting, in every new region, with new enemies, and yet requiring of those who, through their preaching, were become friends and brethren, nothing but a bare subsistence, and sometimes labouring even with their own hands, to save them from that light and reasonable burthen; disclaiming for themselves all authority, pre-eminence and power, and teaching that savage people, who took them for gods, that they were men like themselves, and servants of that Being, to whom alone worship was due.

It is related in the history, what indeed the story of the resurrection necessarily implies, that the body was missed out of the sepulchre; it is related also in the history, that the Jews reported the followers of Christ to have stolen it away; but says St. Paul, Christ *did* rise from the dead; he was seen of Cephas; then of the twelve; then of five hundred brethren, of whom the greater part are still alive; then of James; then of the apostles; last, he was seen of me also, as

of one born out of due time. Now it is plain, whatever fraud there was, St. Paul concurred in it; he combined with others for the promotion of a shameless falsehood; and at the very moment that he was preaching Christ as the Son of God, he must have known, that the promises of Christ's re-appearance were completely frustrated, and every hope which had hitherto supported the courage of his disciples, dissolved into air. Yet this was the man who was in labours more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths often; thrice was this man beaten with rods; once was he stoned; three times did he suffer shipwreck; a night, and a day, was he in the deep; God (he declares) had sent forth the apostles, appointed unto death; we are, says he, a spectacle to the world: even unto this present hour, we both hunger and thirst, and are naked and beaten, and have no certain dwelling-place, and labour, working with our own hands; being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we suffer it; being defamed, we entreat; we are made the filth of the world, and the refuse of all things, unto this day. This is one of those who deceived the world with the story of Christ's resurrection from the dead, and these the splendid objects which he proposed to himself, by that deception.

I will produce only one more instance of his simple and heroic courage in support of his imposture. It was necessary for the good of the church, that St. Paul should go to Jerusalem; and this, at a time, when it was quite certain, from the various accounts brought from that city, that his destruction was intended; his disciples are so much alarmed by the magnitude of his danger, that they beseech him not to go; this is his answer, and in that answer, I request you to examine with all diligence, for those symptoms of false and perjured imposture with which he is charged by his enemies. "What mean you, (he says,) to weep and break my heart, for I am ready, not to be bound only, but to die at Jerusalem for the name of Jesus. I go, not knowing the things that shall befal me there, save that the Holy Ghost witnesseth in every city that bonds and afflictions abide me; but none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the Gospel of the grace of God. I know that ye all, among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God, shall see my face no more, wherefore I take you all to record, that I am innocent

of the blood of all men; I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God; neither for the space of three years, have I ceased to warn every one, night and day, with tears. I have coveted no man's silver, or gold, or apparel. Ye yourselves know that these hands have often ministered to my necessities, and to them that were with me; I have showed you that ye ought to support the weak, remembering the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, it is more blessed to give than to receive;" and when he had thus spoken, they all wept, sorrowing for the words which he spake, that they should see his face no more; he *did* go to Jerusalem, he was imprisoned, and beaten with rods; his speech declares his former sufferings, which we know from other sources to be true; his subsequent misfortunes were as great, his whole life was a continued series of affliction and persecution, not accidentally incurred, but clearly foreseen, bravely met, and patiently endured; bravely met, and patiently endured, because he had seen Christ risen from the dead, and was by that miracle convinced that he was the Son of God; if not, where in any human history is there any conduct similar to that evinced by the apostles? in the ten thousand frauds which have been exercised in the world, where is there any parallel to this? If Christ did not rise from the dead, their preaching was vain, and they knew it to be vain; why then did they die for it? why did they live in misery for it? why did they persevere in it, not in the first warm and faithful moment of conspiracy, but after years, after separation in different corners of the earth? Questioned by different tribunals, awed by different kings, these poor martyrs in the agonies of death, all said, Jesus had risen from the grave; that they had seen him; that he was their God; that they would never disown him, for he would give them immortal life, and not leave them to perish in the grave; and for what temporal purpose could they say this? To preach a pure and enlightened morality. A number of uneducated men, all concurring in a most impudent falsehood, dedicating their lives to it, suffering, and perishing for it, with no other assignable motive than to make their fellow-creatures pious, charitable and just! Can the whole world produce, besides, one single instance of so fraudulent a conspiracy, for the mere purposes of morality and benevolence? The friends of religion are surely entitled to observe, in such an opinion, some faint symptoms of that credulity so frequently and so unjustly objected to them.

Dismissing, then, this supposition of fraud, which is too extravagant to deserve the attention bestowed upon it, let us consider the charge of enthusiasm; let us suppose that the apostles, thoroughly persuaded of the truth of the resurrection, were deluded by their own heated minds; that with them, as with visionaries in general, a very slight proof, coinciding with their enthusiastic notions, had the force of perfect conviction. But upon the supposition of enthusiasm, there occur two, or three questions, which it appears to be quite impossible to answer: Was the body in the grave? if it was, how could they believe Christ to be risen from the dead? if it was not, by whom was it removed? If we admit, upon the concurrent testimonies of all the histories, so much of the account as states that the religion of Jesus was set up at Jerusalem, and set up with asserting, a few days after he was buried, his resurrection from the grave, it is evident the Jews would have produced it as the shortest, the most complete answer to the whole story; the attempt of the apostle could not have survived this answer for a single instant. If we also admit, upon the authority of St. Matthew, that the Jews were aware of the expectations of Christ's followers that he would rise again, and that in consequence of this expectation, the body was in marked and public custody, this argument is of still greater force. Notwithstanding their precaution, when the story of Christ's resurrection came forth as it immediately did, when it was publicly asserted by his disciples, and made the ground and basis of their preaching in his name, and collecting followers to his religion, the Jews had not the body to produce, but were obliged to meet the testimony of the apostles by asserting that the body had been stolen; a supposition compatible enough with fraud, but certainly not with enthusiasm. The very circumstance that Christianity went on at all, that it did not completely terminate with the death of our Saviour, is at once a decisive proof of the truth of the resurrection. It was a point of time at which the truth of the Christian religion was brought to the most rigid test, for they had purposely involved it with this supernatural condition, that the great author and founder of it should rise again from the dead. Why was this added if their religion was not true? it was a difficulty which hardly any falsehood could overcome; and it is quite impossible to conceive why it was made a criterion of the truth of a spurious religion; but as it was made the criterion of Christianity, it is still more difficult

to conceive, why it was not seized hold of by the inveterate enemies of Christianity, finally and completely to exterminate it. There is your prophet dead; there is his sepulchre; there is the lifeless body of him who, as you believe, had power to call the dead from their graves; he saved others, himself he cannot save. Such an answer as this would for ever have put an end to Christianity; it is the answer which incipient fanaticism and imposture have received, in every century of the world, and which, in every instance with which we are acquainted, has been found sufficiently powerful to strangle them in their birth. If these means were never used, or if being used they were powerless against the faith; if that faith grew from hour to hour; if it was propagated by men who declared themselves willing, and who evinced themselves able to endure every earthly affliction for Jesus whom they had seen rising from his tomb; if that faith was adopted, not by cold hearts at distant ages, but by men of that time, who might have heard the groans of Jesus, and looked upon his blood; if the voluptuous Asiatic yielded up to it the pleasures of the flesh; if the Roman saw that his chains could not scare it, nor his sceptre rule it, nor his gods thunder it away; if, curbing every lust, and inspiring every virtue, it crept into all men's hearts, and the earth with all its kingdoms, principalities and powers; and prayed aloud to the mangled Jesus; then, indeed, are we bound to believe that the grave held him not; then we are sure that there is another life than this; that we also shall rise from our graves to glory or to sorrow, as we have gratefully remembered his resurrection, and accurately imitated his life.

SERMON L.

ON SEDUCTION.

The way of the wicked seduceth them.—PROVERBS XII. VERSE 16.

I INTEND in my present discourse to treat on the seduction of the lower class of females in this town; an evil, which has arisen to a very alarming height, and which menaces, with utter corruption, the morals of one of the best and wisest nations in Europe. I have no scruple to attribute this calamity to the profligacy of men in a superior situation of life, and to such I principally mean to apply my observations on this subject.

It is so much the custom to confine ourselves to generalities in the pulpit, and to direct the force of evangelical prohibition against sin in general, rather than any particular species of it, that it may be necessary to remind you how much we gain in precision, and how much we communicate of interest by this abatement of dignity and circumscription. The reasoning which applies to all crimes, acts languidly against each individual crime; it does not paint the appropriate baseness, or echo the reproaches of the heart.—Our Saviour has signified to us his commandments clearly, but generally, and it must therefore be our care to point them at the fluctuating vices of the times; if he has said, do no evil, and love thy neighbour as thyself, it is our duty to state to mankind an instance, in which they are guilty of an irreparable evil to their fellow-creatures, and in which they are entailing endless destruction upon the most unprotected of the human race.

Among the far greater number who resort here for the purposes of real devotion, there may be a few who, led to this sacred place by habit, or a principle of conformity, would be glad to convert their listlessness into mirth, and to catch from

my lips some indiscretion, which would justify a moment of shallow pleasantry; this, God helping, they shall not do; but they shall hear me pleading for the happiness of undefended women, pouring forth for all this church their honest indignation, and hurling the damnation of God on base, brutal, sensual seducers.

First, The character of a seducer is base and dishonourable; if deceit is banished from among equals; if the conduct of every man to those of his own station of life, should be marked by veracity and good faith; why are fallacy and falsehood justified, because they are exercised by talents against ignorance, cunning against simplicity, power against weakness, opulence against poverty? No man ever lured a wretched creature to her ruin, without such a complication of infamous falsehoods as would have condemned him to everlasting infamy, had they been exercised to the prejudice of any one in an higher scene of life; and what must the depravity of that man be who has no other criterion of what he shall do, or from what he shall abstain, than impunity? who has no love of truth, but only a dread of the infamy consequent upon falsehood? and who, as often as he believes that the eye of the world is not turned upon him, will descend to the meanest lies to gratify the foulest vices? A seducer of this class owes his escape from infamy to the inconsistency of his conduct in different situations; it is not believed by the better half of the world, that a man of unimpeached integrity in his own walk of life, who never deviates from truth, and who would repel, at the risk of his life, the imputation of falsehood, it is not believed that such a man can stoop to the most disgraceful subterfuge where he has no equal to awe him into better faith; and that his real object is to unite the gratifications of vice to the convenience arising from the reputation for moral worth.—What a dignified occupation this, for a gentleman, a scholar and a Christian, to blind the understanding of an ignorant creature with specious sophistry, to inflame her vanity, to weaken her distinctions between right and wrong; to give her a distaste for honest industry, and to lead her, by imperceptible gradations, to guilt, to ruin and to sorrow; how must such a man despise himself in the midst of all his artifices? What shame must he feel, to find himself scattering the principles of vice and misery, and breaking down every barrier which the good and wise have reared against the passions? What human being, not arrived at the last stage of profligacy, has not suf-

fered the bitterest reproaches of his own heart for these crimes, and envied in the good, the safe and tranquil feelings of inflexible virtue?

The friends of human happiness must contrast with pain, the hard-earned progress of moral order, and the irresistible inroads of the passions; the one struggles against a strong current, where a momentary remission from labour loses the space which a long toil has gained; the other glides down a torrent which art can make stronger, though nature has made it impetuous. The more we contemplate this world, the greater does the necessity appear for the active vigilance of virtue and wisdom; it has cost whole ages to bring the earth to its present appearance, and to render it fit for culture; millions of our fathers, now dust and ashes, chained up the wild waters, prevailed over the furious beasts, rooted up the forests, let in the heat and light on the green herb, and gave shape and plenty to that which was without form, and void; in a few years of plague, or war, the creatures of the forest would resume their former dominion, and the earth would relapse into its ancient horrid silence; so with our minds as our fields; moral law and government have been built under the revelation of God, by the arts, the eloquence and the wisdom of mighty men; but the worst and lowest of human beings can destroy them, and let loose from their prison all the primitive horrors of savage life; these are melancholy reflections, and they augment the painful indignation we feel at seduction; it is not for the miserable victim alone we grieve; but for the waste of parental affection; the fruitless exertions which have been bestowed on early years, to infuse into an human mind the love of virtue, and an horror of every evil action; we sympathize with the poor industrious parents of a misguided child more than if her seducer had robbed them of their possessions; they have deprived themselves of clothing and food, and often endured the cold, and made their meal more scanty, that they might procure for this child the blessing of a little knowledge; it appears trifling to dwell on such details, but they are the happiness and misery of millions of humble people; everybody knows the anxiety with which the poorest people send forth, for the first time, a daughter into the world; the efforts which they make to supply the loss of her natural protectors, and to fortify her with every good principle which rustic piety and prudence could suggest; perhaps proud of her appearance; perhaps soothing themselves with the notion

that she might contribute something to the support of their declining years. To ruin and corrupt this innocence, is an outrage which the levity even of youth cannot carry off in ridicule; which leaves a young man covered with infamy and guilt, and the imputation of the basest cruelty. With what feelings can he face the just indignations of those into whose humble dwelling he has carried misery and tears; to whom he has laid open the prospect of beholding their daughter the wickedest and most abandoned of human creatures; whose noble pride of adorning poverty with virtue, he has frustrated and mocked? Is it to be borne, that the welfare of human beings should be thus sported with, that the religious and moral principles inspired into the poor with such difficult attention, should be sacrificed to the basest passions of the vilest men, and that any human being should exercise, unpunished, the power of infusing fresh bitterness into the cup of poverty? I know the contempt with which such sort of feelings are apt to be received; but there is a right and a wrong in human affairs, whose irresistible power breaks through every barrier, and makes the heart confess while the looks defy and the tongue denies: there never was a libertine whose soul did not sink within him at the sight of the wretched creature whom he had ruined, who did not know, that he was followed by the curses and the condemnation of every upright man, and that the vengeance of the Almighty was lowering over his head.

To the cruelty of seduction, is generally added the baseness of abandoning its object, of leaving to perish in rags and hunger, a miserable being bribed by promises and oaths of eternal protection and regard. Now let us be just even to sinners; just do I say; let us be merciful in the midst of horror, for their crimes; let us fix before our eyes every circumstance that can extenuate; let us place by the side of the guilt the temptation, and try them as we hope to be tried in a perilous day, by the Great Judge of all; let us allow all the indulgence to youth which youth can require; still if we excuse the errors, we have a right to expect the virtues of that period of life; if the accused party plead the perilous situation in which he is placed, and seizes on all the palliation which that situation can supply, we have a right at least to ask if he has done all the good which that situation prompted: a man may say that his youth excuses him for this vice; but does his youth prompt him to starve a woman he has ruined.

If his youth made him susceptible of beauty, did it also make him forgetful of weakness? was it youth that taught him to fly from a wretched creature for fear she should ask him for bread? Does youth unite fervour with meanness? does it, without a single compensatory virtue, combine its own vices with the vices of every other period of life? is it at once violent, and sordid, avaricious and impassioned, the slave of every other feeling, and the master of generous compassion alone? This is not youth; it has nothing to do with the origin of life; it is cold and callous profligacy began in brutal passion, fostered by irreligion, strengthened by association with bad men, and become so hardened, that it laughs at the misery which it creates.

If I were to show you in this church the figure of a wretched woman, a brutal, shameless creature clothed in rags, pale with hunger and mouldering with disease; if I were to tell you that she had been once happy and once good, that she once had that chance of eternal salvation which we all have this day: if I were to show you the man who had doomed her to misery in this world, and to hell in the world to come, what would your feelings be? But if I were to tell you that the constant occupation of this man was to search for innocence and to ruin it, that he was a seducer by profession, that the great object for which he existed was to gratify his infamous passions at every expense of human happiness; would you not say that his life was too bad for the mercy of God? If the earth was to yawn for him as it yawned for Dathan and Abiram, is there one eye that would be lifted up to ask forgiveness for his soul?

The crime of seduction has this in it of aggravation over other crimes, that it cannot be defended under any of the ingenious systems by which men are perpetually vitiating their understandings, and defending the painful perspicuity of the law of Christ: all the arrogance of theoretical reasoners upon morals has never extended so far as to assert that any one human being has the right to make others as miserable as he pleases; some men have sided with Christ and some with the reasoners of this world: some have said that the Deity was everywhere, and that he guided all; others have contended that he took no care of this world; and the fool has said in his heart, there is no God; but all have said, it is bad to rob and plunder; all have taught us to respect human happiness; all have cursed the oppressor and the maker of

lamentations and tears; this load of solid substantive guilt no human ingenuity, no dissipation, no prosperity can shake off; the eternal laws of nature which regulate growth, and motion, and decay, have fixed also the everlasting empire of conscience; her voice you shall hear in the time of sickness and of pain; it shall follow you to the bed of death; it shall go down with you to the tomb; it shall rise up with you to the resurrection; it shall descend with you to the bottomless pit.

I would not wish to make the character of a seducer worse than it is, perhaps I could not if I did wish; but I would ask these ruiners of the lower class of females, if a great part of their infamous conduct is not to be attributed to impunity? Does it never come into their minds, in the course of their disgraceful, ungentlemanly conduct, that they have nothing to fear from the sword of a brother or a father pointed at their throats; that the object of their designs is without protectors, or with protectors of so low a stamp that their indignation would excite ridicule rather than apprehension; put this kind of feeling into language and see what it means: it says thus to a fellow-creature, I know you are poor, and because you are poor you are helpless, and I will oppress you; from your indignation at the ruin of your child, my rank protects me, and I may pretend to despise what I should fear to oppose; to the laws of your country you have neither wealth nor knowledge to appeal, and your illiterate story of your own injuries can never attract attention. Is there any human being who dares openly to express these sentiments? is it possible to view the conduct of such men as I have been describing, and not be convinced that by such sentiments their conduct must be swayed? or do we think that tenderness to the reputation of a daughter is a mere refinement of education, a privilege, or perhaps a weakness of opulence and rank? if so, go to the meanest of human beings and bargain with him for the dishonour of his child; offer to him ease and plenty; if this will not do, bribe him with all that luxury can give, and see if the proudest monarch would repulse you with fiercer disdain and more decided contempt.

If I have been too warm in my animadversions on this crime, ascribe such warmth to its real cause; a rooted anxiety to do good. The conscience of young men is seldom so hardened as to be proof against remorse; they are seldom desperately and irrecoverably wicked; but while they do

wrong they repent, and their lives roll on to maturity amid the gratifications of sin and the bitterness of self-reproach; how blessed is he above his fellows who arrives at the middle period of human existence ungoaded by the remembrance of great and irreparable crimes; for whose profligacy no child need to blush; on whose account no wretched woman sits at the gate of her seducer crying for bread. Therefore, on account of these sad things, while you are yet young, remember the time of old age; remember what a thing it is to destroy purity of heart;—and if you do chance to meet with an innocent and unprotected woman whom you might, perhaps, have art enough to ruin and degrade, hear the voice of compassion, and lead her not into the paths of death. The memory of this good deed shall cheer you in many an arduous struggle; shall make you dear to your own soul; shall give you the feelings of angels in this life, and their rewards in a life to come.

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

A FRAGMENT

ON THE

IRISH ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH.

PREFACE.

THE following unrevised fragment, found among the papers of the late Rev. Sydney Smith, if it serve no other purpose, will at least prove that his *last*, as well as his earliest efforts, were exerted for the promotion of religious freedom, and may satisfy those who have objected to his later writings, because his own interest appeared to be bound up with his opinions, that he did not hesitate to the last moment of his life, boldly to advocate what he considered to be justice to others.

APRIL, 1845.

Private Memoranda of Subjects intended to have been introduced in the Pamphlet, &c.

Debates in the House of Commons in 1825, on the motion of Lord F. Egerton, for the support of the Roman Catholic clergy. Printed separately, I believe, in Ireland.

Evidence before the House of Commons in 1824 and 1825, including Doyle's.

A Speech of Charles Grant's in 1819, on a motion of James Daly to enforce the Insurrection Act.

Debates on Maynooth, in February last, (1844.)

Hard case of the priest's first year.

Provision offered by Pitt and Castlereagh, and accepted by the hierarchy.

* Send ambassadors to Constantinople, and refuse to send them to Rome.

England should cast off its connection with the Irish Church.

Lord F. Egerton's plan for paying the Roman Catholic clergy in 1825. The prelates agree to take the money.

* Old mode of governing by Protestants at an end.

* Vast improvements since the Union, and fully specified in Martin, page 35.

* Priests dare not thwart the people, for fear of losing money.

* Dreadful oppression of the people.

* Bishops dare not enforce their rules. They must have money.

* These subjects are treated of in the Fragment.

A FRAGMENT

ON

THE IRISH ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH.

The revenue of the Irish Roman Catholic Church is made up of half-pence, potatoes, rags, bones, and fragments of old clothes, and those Irish old clothes. They worship often in hovels, or in the open air, from the *want* of any place of worship. Their religion is the religion of three-fourths of the population! Not far off, in a well-windowed and well-roofed house, is a well-paid Protestant clergyman, preaching to stools and hassocks, and crying in the wilderness; near him the clerk, near him the sexton, near him the sexton's wife—furious against the errors of Popery, and willing to lay down their lives for the great truths established at the Diet of Augsburg.

There is a story in the Leinster family which passes under the name of

"*She is not well.*"

A Protestant clergyman, whose church was in the neighbourhood, was a guest at the house of that upright and excellent man, the Duke of Leinster. He had been staying there three or four days; and on Saturday night, as they were all retiring to their rooms, the duke said, "We shall meet to-morrow at breakfast."—"Not so (said our Milesian Protestant); your hour, my lord, is a little too late for me; I am very particular in the discharge of my duty, and your breakfast will interfere with my church." The duke was pleased with the very proper excuses of his guest, and they separated for the night; —his grace perhaps deeming his palace more safe from all the evils of life for containing in its bosom such an exemplary

son of the Church. The first person, however, whom the duke saw in the morning upon entering the breakfast-room was our punctual Protestant, deep in rolls and butter, his finger in an egg, and a large slice of the best Tipperary ham secured on his plate. "Delighted to see you, my dear vicar," said the duke; "but I may say as much surprised as delighted."—"Oh, don't you know what has happened?" said the sacred breakfaster,—"*she is not well.*"—"Who is not well?" said the duke: "you are not married—you have no sister living—I'm quite uneasy; tell me who is not well."—"Why the fact is, my lord duke, that my congregation consists of the clerk, the sexton, and the sexton's wife. Now the sexton's wife is in very delicate health: when she cannot attend, we cannot muster the number mentioned in the rubric; and we have, therefore, no service on that day. The good woman had a cold and sore throat this morning, and, as I had breakfasted but slightly, I thought I might as well hurry back to the regular family dejeuner." I don't know that the clergyman behaved improperly; but such a church is hardly worth an insurrection and civil war every ten years.

Sir Robert did well in fighting it out with O'Connell. He was too late; but when he began he did it boldly and sensibly, and I, for one, am heartily glad O'Connell has been found guilty and imprisoned. He was either in earnest about Repeal or he was not. If he *was* in earnest, I entirely agree with Lord Grey and Lord Spencer, that civil war is preferable to Repeal. Much as I hate wounds, dangers, privations, and explosions—much as I love regular hours of dinner—foolish as I think men covered with the feathers of the male *Pullus domesticus*, and covered with lace in the course of the ischiatic nerve—much as I detest all these follies and ferocities, I would rather turn soldier myself than acquiesce quietly in such a separation of the empire.

It is *such* a piece of nonsense, that no man can have any reverence for himself who would stop to discuss such a question. It is such a piece of anti-British villainy, that none but the bitterest enemy of our blood and people could entertain such a project! It is to be met only with round and grape—to be answered by Shrapnel and Congreve; to be discussed in hollow squares, and refuted by battalions four deep; to be put down by the *ultima ratio* of that armed Aristotle, the Duke of Wellington.

O'Connell is released; and released I have no doubt by the

conscientious decision of the law lords. If he was unjustly (even from some technical defect) imprisoned, I rejoice in his liberation. England is, I believe, the *only* country in the world where such an event *could* have happened, and a wise Irishman (if there be a wise Irishman) should be slow in separating from a country whose spirit can produce, and whose institutions can admit, of such a result. Of his guilt no one doubts, but guilty men must be hung technically and according to established rules; upon a statutable gibbet, with parliament rope, and a legal hangman, sheriff, and chaplain on the scaffold, and the mob in the foreground.

But, after all, I have no desire my dear Daniel should come to any harm, for I believe there is a great deal of virtue and excellent meaning in him, and I must now beg a few minutes conversation with him. "After all, my dear Daniel, what is it you want?—a separation of the two countries?—for what purpose?—for your own aggrandizement?—for the gratification of your personal vanity? You don't know yourself; you are much too honourable and moral a man, and too clear-sighted a person for such a business as this: the empire will be twisted out of your hands by a set of cut-throat villains, and you will die secretly by a poisoned potato, or be pistoled in the streets. You have too much sense, and taste, and openness, to endure for a session, the stupid and audacious wickedness and nonsense of your associates. If you want fame, you must be insatiable! Who is so much known in all Europe, or so much admired by honest men for the *real* good you had done to your country, before this insane cry of Repeal? And don't imagine you can intimidate this government; whatever be their faults or merits, you may take my word for it, you will *not* intimidate them. They will prosecute you again, and put down your Clontarf meetings, and they will be quite right in doing so. They may make concessions, and I think they will; but they would fall into utter contempt, if they allowed themselves to be terrified into a dissolution of the Union. They know full well that the English nation are unanimous and resolute upon this point, and that they would prefer war to a Repeal. And now, dear Daniel, sit down quietly at Derrynane, and tell me, when the bodily frame is refreshed with the wine of Bordeaux, whether all this is worth while. What is the object of all government? The object of all government is roast mutton, potatoes, claret, a stout constable, an honest justice, a clear highway, a free

chapel. What trash to be bawling in the streets about the Green Isle, the Isle of the Ocean! the bold anthem of *Erin go bragh!* A far better anthem would be Erin go bread and cheese, Erin go cabins that will keep out the rain, Erin go pantaloons without holes in them! What folly to be making eternal declamations about governing yourselves! If laws are good and well administered, is it worth while to rush into war and rebellion, in order that no better laws may be made in another place? Are you an Eton boy, who has just come out, full of Plutarch's Lives, and considering in every case how Epaminondas or Philopœmen would have acted, or are you our own dear Daniel, drilled in all the business and bustle of life? I am with you heart and soul in my detestation of all injustice done to Ireland. Your priests shall be fed and paid, the liberties of your Church be scrupulously guarded, and in civil affairs the most even justice be preserved between Catholic and Protestant. Thus far I am a thorough rebel as well as yourself; but when you come to the perilous nonsense of *Repeal*, in common with every honest man who has five grains of common sense, I take my leave."

It is entertaining enough, that although the Irish are beginning to be so clamorous about making their own laws, that the wisest and the best statutes in the books have been made since their union with England. All Catholic disabilities have been abolished; a good police has been established all over the kingdom; public courts of petty sessions have been instituted; free trade between Great Britain and Ireland has been completely carried into effect; lord lieutenants are placed in every county; church rates are taken off Catholic shoulders; the county grand jury rooms are flung open to the public; county surveyors are of great service; a noble provision is made for educating the people. I never saw a man who had returned to Ireland after four or five years' absence, who did not say how much it had improved, and how fast it was improving; and this is the country which is to be Erin-go-bragh'd by this shallow, vain, and irritable people into bloodshed and rebellion!

The first thing to be done is to pay the priests, and after a little time they will take the money. One man wants to repair his cottage; another wants a buggy; a third cannot shut his eyes to the dilapidations of a cassock. The draft is payable at sight in Dublin, or by agents in the next market town dependent upon the commission in Dublin. The housekeeper

of the holy man is importunate for money, and if it is not procured by drawing for the salary, it must be extorted by curses and comminations from the ragged worshipers, slowly, sorrowfully, and sadly. There will be some opposition at first, but the facility of getting the salary without the violence they are now forced to use, and the difficulties to which they are exposed in procuring the payment of those emoluments to which they are fairly entitled, will, in the end, overcome all obstacles. And if it does not succeed, what harm is done by the attempt? It evinces on the part of this country the strongest disposition to do what is just, and to apply the best remedy to the greatest evil; but the very attempt would do good, and would be felt in the great Catholic insurrection, come when it will. All rebellions and disaffections are general and terrible in proportion as one party has suffered, and the other inflicted;—any great measure of conciliation, proposed in the spirit of kindness, is remembered, and renders war less terrible, and opens avenues to peace.

The Roman Catholic priest could not refuse to draw his salary from the state without incurring the indignation of his flock. "Why are you to come upon us for all this money, when you can ride over to Sligo or Belfast, and draw a draft upon government for the amount?" It is not easy to give a satisfactory answer to this, to a shrewd man who is starving to death.

Of course, in talking of a government payment to the Catholic priest, I mean it should be done with the utmost fairness and good faith; no attempt to gain patronage, or to make use of the pope as a stalking-horse for playing tricks. Leave the patronage exactly as you find it; and take the greatest possible care that the Catholic clergy have no reason to suspect you in this particular; do it like a gentleman, without shuffling and prevarication, or leave it alone altogether.

The most important step in improvement which mankind ever made, was the secession from the see of Rome, and the establishment of the Protestant religion; but though I have the sincerest admiration of the Protestant faith, I have no admiration of Protestant hassocks on which there are no knees, nor of seats on which there is no superincumbent Protestant pressure, nor of whole acres of tenantless Protestant pews, in which no human being of the 500 sects of Christians is ever seen. I have no passion for sacred emptiness, or pious vacuity. The emoluments of those livings in which there are

few or no Protestants, ought, after the death of the present incumbents, to be appropriated in part to the uses of the predominant religion, or some arrangements made for superseding such utterly useless ministers immediately, securing to them the emoluments they possess.

Can any honest man say, that in parishes (as is the case frequently in Ireland) containing 3000 or 4000 Catholics, and 40 or 50 Protestants, there is the smallest chance of the majority being converted? Are not the Catholics (except in the North of Ireland, where the great mass are Presbyterians) gaining everywhere on the Protestants? The tithes were originally possessed by the Catholic Church of Ireland. Not one shilling of them is now devoted to that purpose. An immense majority of the common people are Catholics; they see a church richly supported by the spoils of their own church establishments, in whose tenets not one tenth part of the people believe. Is it possible to believe this can endure?—that a light, irritable, priest-ridden people will not, under such circumstances, always remain at the very eve of rebellion, always ready to explode when the finger of Daniel touches the hair trigger?—for Daniel, be it said, though he hates shedding blood in small quantities, has no objection to provoking kindred nations to war. He very properly objects to killing or being killed by Lord Alvanley; but would urge on ten thousand Pats in civil combat against ten thousand Bulls. His objections are to small homicides; and his vow that he has registered in Heaven is only against retail destruction, and murder by piecemeal. He does not like to teaze Satan by driblets; but to earn eternal torments by persuading eight million Irish, and twelve million Britons no longer to buy and sell oats and salt meat, but to butcher each other in God's name to extermination. And what if Daniel dies, of what use his death? Does Daniel make the occasion, or does the occasion make Daniel?—Daniels are made by the bigotry and insolence of England to Ireland; and till the monstrous abuses of the Protestant Church in that country are rectified, there will always *be* Daniels, and they will always come out of their dens more powerful and more popular than when you cast them in.

I do not mean by this unjustly and cowardly to run down O'Connell. He has been of eminent service to his country in the question of Catholic Emancipation, and I am by no means satisfied that with the gratification of vanity there are

not mingled genuine feelings of patriotism and a deep sense of the injustice done to his country. His first success, however, flung him off his guard; and perhaps he trusted too much in the timidity of the present government, who are by no means composed of irresolute or weak men.

If I thought Ireland quite safe, I should still object to injustice. I could never endure in silence that the Catholic Church of Ireland should be left in its present state; but I am afraid France and England can now afford to fight; and having saved a little money, they will, of course, spend it in fighting. That puppy of the waves, young Joinville, will steam over in a high-pressure fleet!—and then comes an immense twenty per cent. income-tax war, an universal insurrection in Ireland, and a crisis of misery and distress, in which life will hardly be worth having. The struggle *may* end in our favour, but it may *not;* and the object of political wisdom is to avoid these struggles. I want to see jolly Roman Catholic priests secure of their income without any motive for sedition or turbulence. I want to see Patricks at the loom; cotton and silk factories springing up in the bogs; Ireland a rich, happy, quiet country!—scribbling, carding, cleaning, and making calico, as if mankind had only a few days more allotted to them for making clothes, and were ever after to remain stark naked.

Remember that between your impending and your past wars with Ireland, there is this remarkable difference. You have given up your Protestant auxiliaries; the Protestants enjoyed in all former disputes all the patronage of Ireland; they fought not only from religious hatred, but to preserve their monopoly;—that monopoly is gone; you have been candid and just for thirty years, and have lost those friends whose swords were always ready to defend the partiality of the government and to stifle the cry of justice. The next war will not be between Catholic and Protestant, but between Ireland and England.

I have some belief in Sir Robert. He is a man of great understanding, and *must* see that this eternal O'Connelling will never do, that it is impossible it can last. We are in a transition state, and the Tories may be assured that the baronet will not go too fast. If Peel tells them that the thing must be done, they may be sure it is high time to do it;—they may retreat mournfully and sullenly before common justice and common sense, but retreat they must when Tam-

worth gives the word,—and in quick-step too, and without loss of time.

And let me beg of my dear Ultras not to imagine that they survive for a single instant without Sir Robert—that they could form an ultra-tory administration. Is there a Chartist in Great Britain who would not, upon the first intimation of such an attempt, order a new suit of clothes, and call upon the baker and milkman for an extended credit? Is there a political reasoner who would not come out of his hole with a new constitution? Is there one ravenous rogue who would not be looking for his prey? Is there one honest man of common sense who does not see that universal disaffection and civil war would follow from the blind fury, the childish prejudices, and the deep ignorance of such a sect? I have a high opinion of Sir Robert Peel, but he must summon up all his political courage, and do something next session for the payment of the Roman Catholic priests. He must run some risk of shocking public opinion; no greater risk, however, than he did in Catholic Emancipation. I am sure the Whigs would be true to him, and I think I observe that very many obtuse country gentlemen are alarmed by the state of Ireland, and the hostility of France and America.

Give what you please to the Catholic priests, habits are not broken in a day. There must be time as well as justice, but in the end these things have their effect. A buggy, a house, some fields near it, a decent income paid quarterly; in the long run these are the cures of sedition and disaffection; men don't quit the common business of life, and join bitter political parties, unless they have something justly to complain of.

But where is the money—about 400,000*l.* per annum—to come from? Out of the pockets of the best of men, Mr. Thomas Grenville, out of the pockets of the bishops, of Sir Robert Inglis, and all other men who pay all other taxes; and never will public money be so well and wisely employed!

It turns out that there is no law to prevent entering into diplomatic engagements with the pope. The sooner we become acquainted with a gentleman who has so much to say to eight millions of our subjects, the better! Can anything be so childish and absurd as a horror of communicating with the pope, and all the hobgoblins we have imagined of premunires and outlawries for this contraband trade in piety?

Our ancestors (strange to say, wiser than ourselves), have left us to do as we please, and the sooner government do what they can do legally, the better. A thousand opportunities of doing good in Irish affairs have been lost, from our having no avowed and dignified agent at the Court of Rome. If it depended upon me, I would send the Duke of Devonshire there to-morrow, with nine chaplains and several tons of Protestant theology. I have no love of popery, but the pope is at all events better than the idol of Juggernaut, whose chaplains I believe we pay, and whose chariot I dare say is made in Long Acre. We pay 10,000*l.* a year to our ambassador at Constantinople, and are startled with the idea of communicating diplomatically with Rome, deeming the Sultan a better Christian than the pope!

The mode of exacting clerical dues in Ireland is quite arbitrary and capricious. Uniformity is out of the question; everything depends on the disposition and temper of the clergyman. There are salutary regulations put forth in each diocese respecting church dues and church discipline, and put forth by episcopal and synodical authority. Specific sums are laid down for mass, marriage, and the administration of the Eucharist. These authorized payments are moderate enough, but every priest, in spite of these rules, makes the most he can of his ministry, and the *strangest* discrepancy prevails, even in the same diocese, in the demands made upon the people. The priest and his flock are continually coming into collision on pecuniary matters. Twice a year the holy man collects confession money under the denomination of Christmas and Easter offerings. He selects in every neighbourhood, one or two houses in which he holds stations of confession. Very disagreeable scenes take place when additional money is demanded, or when additional time for payment is craved. The first thing done when there is a question of marrying a couple is, to make a *bargain* about the marriage money. The wary minister watches the palpitations, puts on a shilling for every sigh, and two-pence on every tear, and maddens the impetuosity of the young lovers up to a pound sterling. The remuneration prescribed by the diocesan statutes, is never thought of for a moment; the priest makes as hard a bargain as he can, and the bed the poor peasants are to lie upon is sold, to make their concubinage lawful;—but every one present at the marriage is to contribute;—the minister, after begging and

intreating some time to little purpose, gets into a violent rage, abuses and is abused;—and in this way is celebrated one of the sacraments of the Catholic Church!—The same scenes of altercation and abuse take place when gossip money is refused at baptisms; but the most painful scenes take place at extreme unction, a ceremony to which the common people in Ireland attach the utmost importance. "Pay me beforehand —this is not enough—I insist upon more, I know you can afford it, I insist upon a larger fee!"—and all this before the dying man, who feels he has not an hour to live! and believes that salvation depends upon the timely application of this sacred grease.

Other bad consequences arise out of the present system of Irish Church support. Many of the clergy are constantly endeavouring to over-reach and undermine one another. Every man looks to his own private emolument, regardless of all covenants, expressed or implied. The curate does not make a fair return to the parish priest, nor the parish priest to the curate. There is an universal scramble!—every one gets what he can, and seems to think he would be almost justified in appropriating the whole to himself. And how can all this be otherwise? How are the poor wretched clergy to live but by setting a high price on their theological labours, and using every incentive of fear and superstition to extort from six millions of beggars the little payments wanted for the bodies of the poor, and the support of life! I maintain that it is shocking and wicked to leave the religious guides of six millions of people in such a state of destitution! —to bestow no more thought upon them than upon the clergy of the Sandwich Islands! If I were a member of the cabinet, and met my colleagues once a week, to eat birds and beasts, and to talk over the state of the world, I should begin upon Ireland before the soup was finished, go on through fish, turkey, and saddle of mutton, and never end till the last thimbleful of claret had passed down the throat of the incredulous Haddington: but there they sit, week after week; there they come, week after week; the Piccadilly Mars, the Scotch Neptune, Themis Lyndhurst, the Tamworth baronet, dear Goody, and dearer Gladdy, and think no more of paying the Catholic clergy, than a man of real fashion does of paying his tailor! And there is no excuse for this in fanaticism. There is only one man in the cabinet who objects from reasons purely fanatical, because the pope is the Scarlet

Lady, or the Seventh Vial, or the Little Horn. All the rest are entirely of opinion that it *ought* to be done—that it is the one thing needful; but they are afraid of bishops, and county meetings, newspapers, and pamphlets, and reviews; all fair enough objects of apprehension, but they must be met, and encountered, and put down. It is impossible that the subject can be much longer avoided, and that every year is to produce a deadly struggle with the people, and a long trial in time of peace with O' somebody, the patriot for the time being, or the general, perhaps, in time of a foreign war.

If I were a bishop, living beautifully in a state of serene plenitude, I don't think I could endure the thought of so many honest, pious, and laborious clergymen of another faith, placed in such disgraceful circumstances! I could not get into my carriage with jelly-springs, or see my two courses every day, without remembering the buggy and the bacon of some poor old Catholic bishop, ten times as laborious, and with much more, perhaps, of theological learning than myself, often distressed for a few pounds! and burthened with duties utterly disproportioned to his age and strength. I think, if the extreme comfort of my own condition did not extinguish all feeling for others, I should sharply commiserate such a church, and attempt with ardour and perseverance to apply the proper remedy. Now let us bring names and well-known scenes before the English reader, to give him a clearer notion of what passes in Catholic Ireland. The living of St. George's, Hanover Square, is a benefice of about 1500*l.* per annum, and a good house. It is in the possession of Dr. Hodgson, who is also Dean of Carlisle, worth, I believe, about 1500*l.* more. A more comfortable existence can hardly be conceived. Dr. Hodgson is a very worthy, amiable man, and I am very glad he is as rich as he is: but suppose he he had no revenues but what he got off his own bat,—suppose that instead of tumbling through the skylight, as his income now does, it was procured by Catholic methods. The Doctor tells Mr. Thompson he will not marry him to Miss Simpson under 30*l.*; Thompson demurs, and endeavours to beat him down. The Doctor sees Miss Simpson; finds her very pretty; thinks Thompson hasty, and after a long and undignified negotiation, the Doctor gets his fee. Soon after this he receives a message from Place, the tailor, to come and anoint him with extreme unction. He repairs to the bed-side, and tells Mr. Place that he will not touch him

under a suit of clothes, equal to 10*l.*: the family resist, the altercation goes on before the perishing artizan, the price is reduced to 8*l.*, and Mr. Place is oiled. On the ensuing Sunday the child of Lord B. is to be christened: the godfathers and godmothers will only give a sovereign each; the Doctor refuses to do it for the money, and the church is a scene of clamour and confusion. These are the scenes which, under similar circumstances, *would* take place here, for the congregation want the comforts of religion without fees, and will cheat the clergyman if they can; and the clergyman who means to live, must meet all these artifices with stern resistance. And this is the wretched state of the Irish Roman Catholic clergy!—a miserable blot and stain on the English nation! What a blessing to this country would a real bishop be! A man who thought it the first duty of Christianity to allay the bad passions of mankind, and to reconcile contending sects with each other. What peace and happiness such a man as the Bishop of London might have conferred on the empire, if, instead of changing black dresses for white dresses, and administering to the frivolous disputes of foolish zealots, he had laboured to abate the hatred of Protestants for the Roman Catholics, and had dedicated his powerful understanding to promote religious peace in the two countries. Scarcely any bishop is sufficiently a man of the world to deal with fanatics. The way is not to reason with them, but to ask them to dinner. They are armed against logic and remonstrance, but they are puzzled in a labyrinth of wines, disarmed by facilities and concessions, introduced to a new world, come away thinking more of hot and cold, and dry and sweet, than of Newman, Keble, and Pusey. So mouldered away Hannibal's army at Capua! So the primitive and perpendicular prig of Puseyism is softened into practical wisdom, and coaxed into common sense! Providence gives us generals, and admirals, and chancellors of the exchequer; but I never remember in my time a real bishop—a grave, elderly man, full of Greek, with sound views of the middle voice and preterperfect tense, gentle and kind to his poor clergy, of powerful and commanding eloquence; in Parliament never to be put down when the great interests of mankind were concerned; leaning to the government when *it* was right, leaning to the people when *they* were right; feeling that if the Spirit of God had called him to that high office, he was called for no mean

purpose, but rather that, seeing clearly, and acting boldly, and intending purely, he might confer lasting benefits upon mankind.

We consider the Irish clergy as factious, and as encouraging the bad anti-British spirit of the people. How can it be otherwise? They live by the people; they have nothing to live upon but the voluntary oblations of the people; and they must fall into the same spirit as the people, or they would be starved to death. No marriage; no mortuary masses; no unctions to the priest who preached against O'Connell!

Give the clergy a maintenance separate from the will of the people, and you will then enable them to oppose the folly and madness of the people. The objection to the state provision does not really come from the clergy, but from the agitators and repealers: these men see the immense advantage of carrying the clergy with them in their agitation, and of giving the sanction of religion to political hatred; they know that the clergy, moving in the same direction with the people, have an immense influence over them; and they are very wisely afraid, not only of losing this co-operating power, but of seeing it, by a state provision, arrayed against them. I am fully convinced that a state payment to the Catholic clergy, by leaving to that laborious and useful body of men the exercise of their free judgment, would be the severest blow that Irish agitation could receive.

For advancing these opinions, I have no doubt I shall be assailed by Sacerdos, Vindex, Latimer, Vates, Clericus, Aruspex, and be called atheist, deist, democrat, smuggler, poacher, highwayman, Unitarian, and Edinburgh reviewer! Still, *I am in the right*,—and what I say requires excuse for being trite and obvious, not for being mischievous and paradoxical. I write for three reasons; first, because I really wish to do good; secondly, because if I don't write, I know nobody else will; and thirdly, because it is the nature of the animal to write, and I cannot help it. Still, in looking back I see no reason to repent. What I have said *ought* to be done, generally *has* been done, but always twenty or thirty years too late; done, not of course because I have said it, but because it was no longer *possible* to avoid doing it. Human beings cling to their delicious tyrannies, and to their exquisite nonsense, like a drunkard to his bottle, and go on till death stares them in the face. The monstrous state of the Catholic Church in Ireland will probably remain till some

monstrous ruin threatens the very existence of the empire, and Lambeth and Fulham are cursed by the affrighted people.

I have always compared the Protestant church in Ireland (and I believe my friend Thomas Moore stole the simile from me) to the institution of butchers' shops in all the villages of our Indian empire. "We *will* have a butcher's shop in every village, and you, Hindoos, shall pay for it. We know that many of you do not eat meat at all, and that the sight of beef steaks is particularly offensive to you; but still, a stray European may pass through your village, and want a steak or a chop: the shop *shall* be established; and you shall pay for it." This is English legislation for Ireland!! There is no abuse like it in all Europe, in all Asia, in all the discovered parts of Africa, and in all we have heard of Timbuctoo! It is an error that requires 20,000 armed men for its protection in time of peace; which costs more than a million a year; and which, in the first French war, in spite of the puffing and panting of fighting steamers, will and *must* break out into desperate rebellion.

It is commonly said, if the Roman Catholic priests are paid by the state, they will lose their influence over their flocks;—not their *fair* influence—not that influence which any wise and good man would wish to see in all religions—not the dependence of humble ignorance upon prudence and piety—only fellowship in faction, and fraternity in rebellion;—all *that* will be lost. A peep-of-day clergyman will no longer preach to a peep-of-day congregation—a Whiteboy vicar will no longer lead the psalm to Whiteboy vocalists; but everything that is good and wholesome will remain. This, however, is not what the anti-British faction want; they want all the animation which piety can breathe into sedition, and all the fury which the priesthood can preach to diversity of faith: and *this* is what they mean by a clergy losing their influence over the people! The less a clergyman exacts of his people, the more his payments are kept out of sight, the less will be the friction with which he exercises the functions of his office. A poor Catholic may respect a priest the more who marries, baptizes, and anoints; but he respects him because he associates with his name and character the performance of sacred duties, not because he exacts heavy fees for doing so. Double fees would be a very doubtful cure for skepticism; and though we have often seen the tenth of the earth's produce carted

away for the benefit of the clergyman, we do not remember any very lively marks of satisfaction and delight which it produced in the countenance of the decimated person. I am thoroughly convinced that state payments to the Catholic clergy would remove a thousand causes of hatred between the priest and his flock, and would be as favourable to the increase of his useful authority, as it would be fatal to his factious influence over the people.

THE END.

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